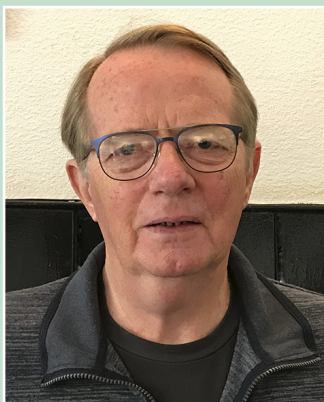


# **WALKING ON THE WEST PENNINE MOORS**



### About the Author

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*Walking the West Highland Way*  
*Walking in the Forest of Bowland*  
*and Pendle*

## WALKING ON THE WEST PENNINE MOORS

by  
Terry Marsh

**CICERONE**

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*This book is dedicated to the memory of my dad,  
 John Marsh (1921–2009),  
 who died peacefully during the course of the book's preparation.*

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Front cover: Darwen Tower (Walks 13 and 14)

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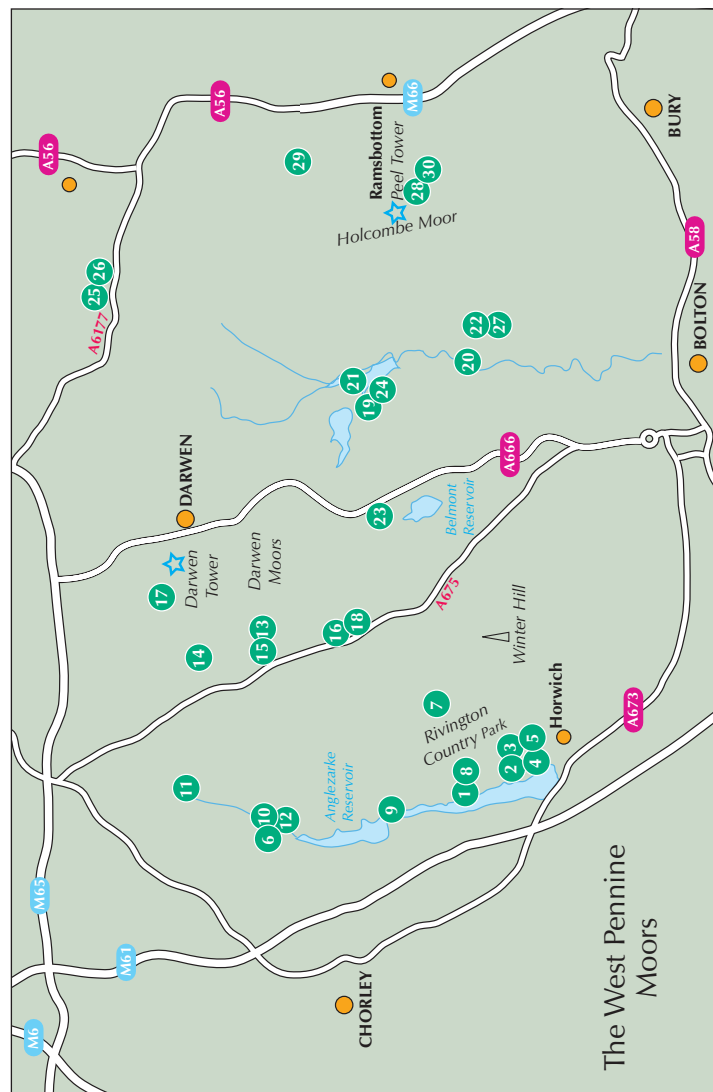
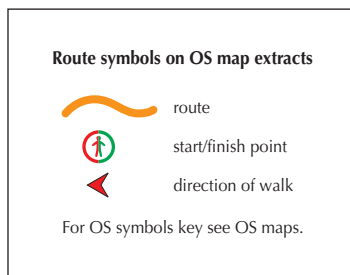
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Above Anglezarke Reservoir (Walk 9)

## INTRODUCTION

The West Pennine Moors, located between the towns of Chorley, Bolton, Horwich, Ramsbottom, Haslingden, Oswaldtwistle and Darwen, comprise 233km<sup>2</sup> (90 square miles) of moorland and reservoir scenery. The area has been a place of recreation for many generations of Lancashire folk; indeed, long before the much-vaunted mass trespass on Kinder Scout, there were organised trespasses in the late 1800s (small and large: around 10,000 people in 1896) and court proceedings on both Winter Hill and Darwen Moor in an attempt to keep rights of way across the moors open. The West Pennine Moors were very much in the vanguard of the campaign for access to our countryside, not that you'll find many so-called authoritative texts on

the matter admitting as much. But the facts speak for themselves; it happened here first.

Dissected by wooded cloughs and characterised by skyline features like Rivington Pike, the Peel Monument on Holcombe Moor and Jubilee Tower (also known as Darwen Tower) on Darwen Moor, the moors are a highly valued and much-appreciated region for recreation and study. Almost the entire area is water catchment, and the successor to the North West Water Authority, United Utilities, owns around 40 per cent of the land, and operates four information centres – at Rivington, Jumbles Country Park, Roddlesworth and Clough Head, Haslingden Grane, which also offer refreshment facilities.



Darwen Tower (Walk 14)



*The summit of Cheetham Close (Walk 24)*

For the walker, the area has much to offer. This is gritstone country, and the landscape is often dark and sombre as a result. And there is a clue in its use as a water catchment area; in all but the driest of climatic periods, it is wet, boggy and invariably muddy. This might lead you to suppose that it is unappetising, unappealing and unattractive. But nothing could be further from the truth. This is a beautiful, semi-primeval landscape, a moorland theatre of considerable appeal and attraction, and a superb canvas for interests in flora, fauna, biology – even the modern leisure pursuit of geocaching. Come here at any time of year, and you will find others doing the same. The West Pennine Moors are a rich and varied playground for the walker, giving pleasure throughout the year.

#### GEOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY

Rising to a peak on Winter Hill (456m/1496ft), the area is predominantly upland, with myriad well-trodden paths and areas of historical and geological significance. Although a large area of moorland became freely accessible under the right-to-roam legislation introduced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) much of the terrain is marshy and difficult walking, and the footpaths – of which there are a great many – generally remain the most convenient means of access.

The moorland occurs in fairly well-defined blocks – at Withnell, Anglezarke and Rivington Moors; Darwen and Turton Moors; and Oswaldtwistle and Holcombe Moors, where the prevalent land use is sheep

farming. Unlike other areas of moorland in the north of England, the West Pennine Moors are not managed for grouse shooting (not for want of trying), and are characterised by rough grassland and peat bog. This is one of the reasons why the moors never suffered the same degree of ‘access aggravation’ that occurred further south, in the Peak District.

Providing useful habitat areas for wildlife, the West Pennine Moors are bisected by a number of wooded valleys and cloughs, the largest being the Raddlesworth valley, near Tockholes. Although there are some small coniferous plantations, particularly around the reservoirs, the woodland cover overall is nominal, and it is a fine sense of openness that dominates here, and this, coupled with the

intricate network of footpaths, makes the area an ideal place to begin a lifetime of recreational walking and to practice the necessary skills of map reading and navigation.

The main valleys are consumed by large reservoirs constructed in the mid- to late 19th century to supply water for Lancashire’s urban population. Evidence of this Victorian landscape is found in the form of mixed woodlands, styles of architecture and dressed stone walls. Along the valleys, the landscape is characterised by farmland pasture and meadows enclosed by drystone walls, built from the sombre gritstone that pervades great parts of the moorland area. Species-rich grassland is restricted in both area and distribution, mostly to steeper valleys or cloughs.



*Approaching White Coppice (Walk 6)*





*It's worth keeping your eyes open in the woodlands...*

The valleys are very rural in character, with large areas of grazing land and broadleaved woodland and plantations, notably around Roddlesworth and the Turton and Entwistle reservoirs, which enable them to absorb high numbers of recreational visitors without feeling overcrowded. It is a curious paradox: you may always be able to see someone, or a farm or villages, but yet feel very isolated up on the moors. Although native broadleaved woodland is a habitat restricted almost entirely to valleys, there are fine examples of oak woodland, ash woodland, and wet woodland dominated by alder or willow, such as at Longworth Clough SSSI.

### Plantlife

The West Pennine Moors area is recognised as a Core Biodiversity Resource at both regional and sub-regional levels, supporting a range of UK Priority Habitats and Species. The moors and farmland that surround and meld with the West Pennine Moors have a high level of biodiversity. Where the moors are unenclosed, there are widespread areas of blanket bog on deep peat soils.

Repeatedly modified by grazing, burning and attempts at drainage, the moors are in places dominated by purple moor-grass, along with distinctive species such as cotton-grass, heather, cross-leaved heath, cranberry and numerous species of sphagnum moss, as well as less

prevalent plants like bog rosemary. Elsewhere there are rolling areas of upland heath, acidic grassland and upland flushes.

The extensive hill peat is of considerable importance for preserved plant and animal remains, and as a means of providing information about past climates and weather patterns. Most importantly, it has a significant role in future carbon dioxide sequestration to mitigate climate change, and in water catchment.

### Birdlife

Ornithologically, all of the reservoirs, especially Jumbles, Wayoh, Delph, Belmont and Rivington, are important to wintering wildfowl. Belmont is also significant for the breeding waders associated with the adjacent in-bye pastures. The woodlands and plantations are valuable for breeding birds, including woodcock, redstart and pied flycatcher.

Moorland birds include peregrine, merlin, dunlin, wheatear, snipe, short-eared owl, golden plover, kestrel, buzzard, and an occasional sparrowhawk. Some of the more improved pastures still retain populations of breeding wading birds, such as lapwing and curlew, and particularly in the fields and margins around Belmont Reservoir there are often large groups of oystercatcher, redshank and sandpiper. The reservoir itself has nationally important populations of black-headed gull.

## HUMAN INFLUENCE

The cultural heritage of the area is of similar significance, stretching from Neolithic times to the remains of 18th and 19th century industrial and farming activities – such as mines and quarries, field systems and abandoned farmsteads. Evidence of pre-industrial use shows itself in field patterns on the lower valley sides, abandoned farmsteads, and buildings like the medieval manor house at Turton. However the construction of the reservoirs and pre-reservoir mining has destroyed many early remains of land use and settlement. Evidence of later settlement is widespread throughout the valleys, for example near Anglezarke where there are remnants of 18th-century lead mines.

The cotton industry was well established in Lancashire by the 1750s. Cotton goods imported from India were highly fashionable and very expensive, so there was a demand for a cheaper alternative. By the 1840s handloom weaving was in decline, but Lancashire had some important advantages as mechanisation increased. It was close to sources of cheap coal, and to the manufacturers of machinery in Oldham and Manchester. In addition, Liverpool was the primary port in the UK for importing cotton from the Americas.

As the Industrial Revolution progressed, so the local population increased, and in the 19th century the landscape was transformed by the construction of large water bodies to

supply the surrounding conurbations. The reservoirs represent major feats of engineering and construction, and are of considerable historical significance. Victorian detailing of the built features of the reservoirs – Gothic-style valve towers and crenellated stone walls with decorative reliefs, for example – are important architectural heritage.

## The Witton Weavers Way

In Victorian times, Lancashire was the centre of the cotton industry, and mill towns like Blackburn and Darwen, very much at the heart of the West Pennine Moors, were known across the world. Before the Industrial Revolution, however, handloom weavers worked from home, from the lovely stone-built cottages that still serve as the nucleus of many of the Lancashire villages and hamlets.

The Witton Weavers Way is a 51km (32-mile) trail around the industrial uplands of Lancashire – a commemoration, if you like, of those past times. It is a journey that leads past many of those ancient cottages, Tudor halls, Victorian estates, business-like villages and even Roman roads.

The full Witton Weavers Way can be completed in two days, but within its journey there are also four shorter circular walks that can each be covered in a day. Named after jobs within the cotton industry, these are the Beamers (10km/6 miles), Reelers (12km/7½ miles), Tacklers (15km/9½ miles) and Warpors (13.5km/8½



On the Witton Weavers' Way, Turton Heights (Walk 22)

miles) Trails. Many of the walks in this book encounter or use stretches of these individual walks, and all are waymarked.

The official starting point is Witton Country Park, on the outskirts of Blackburn, but the Way can be joined at many alternative points. Full details of the individual walks, along with route descriptions, are available from [www.blackburn.gov.uk](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk).

## INTRODUCING THE VALLEYS

## Rivington

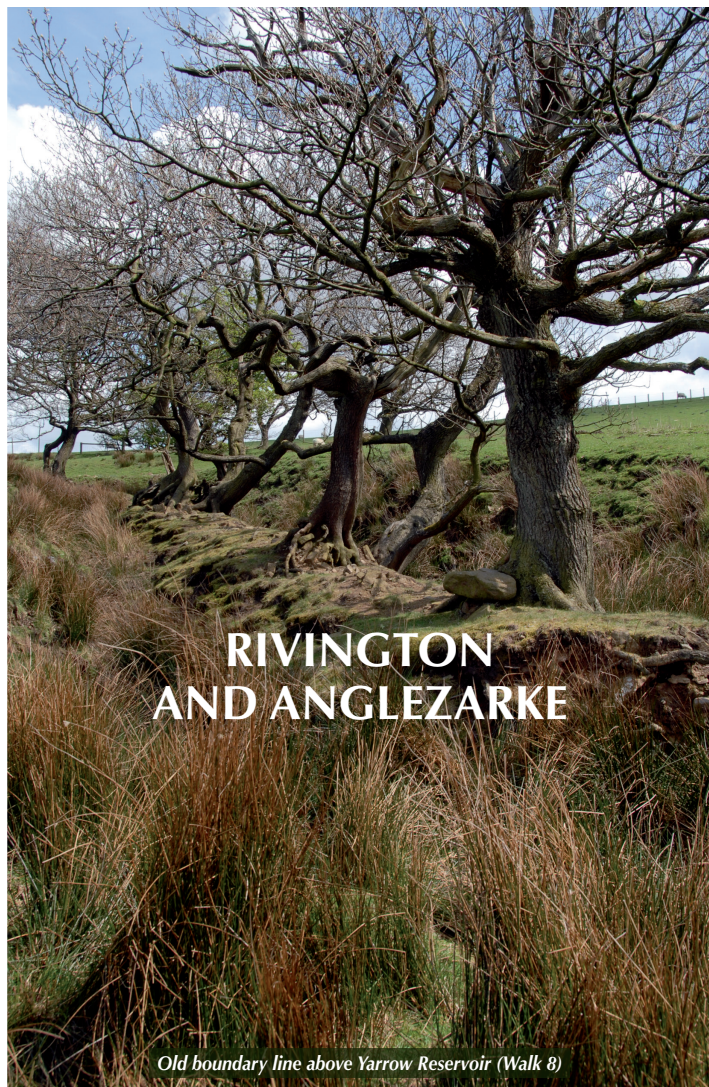
This wide, shallow valley is largely water-filled and contains three reservoirs: Anglezarke, Upper and Lower Rivington, and Yarrow. Built by Liverpool Corporation in the

mid-19th century, these reservoirs cover the courses of three separate streams. Much of the character of the lower part of the valley owes its influence to Lord Leverhulme, who had his home at Rivington Hall. His keen interest in architecture and landscape design permeates the valley in the form of long, tree-lined avenues, a network of footpaths, the Rivington Terraced Gardens, and a replica of the ruins of Liverpool Castle on the banks of Lower Rivington Reservoir. The landscape of Lever Park now forms part of Rivington County Park.

## Turton-Jumbles

This valley to the north of Bolton contains a line of three smaller reservoirs surrounded by woodland, mainly in the form of conifer plantations.





## WALK 1

### *Around Anglezarke Reservoir*

<b>Start/Finish</b>	Rivington (SD628140)
<b>Distance</b>	11km (7 miles)
<b>Height gain</b>	185m (605ft)
<b>Terrain</b>	Field paths, good tracks, some road walking

This circuit of the Anglezarke Reservoir (constructed in 1857) uses parts of a number of paths used in other walks, and is typical of the scope for invention that the area around Rivington allows. A pair of binoculars would be useful, as you spend a deal of time close by the water, with the prospect of spotting birdlife. There is ample parking in the many side lanes that branch from the main road through Rivington, if the Great House Barn car park is full.

Wherever you park, head for the small green at Rivington village, taking a moment first to inspect the stocks that held the miscreants of yesteryear.

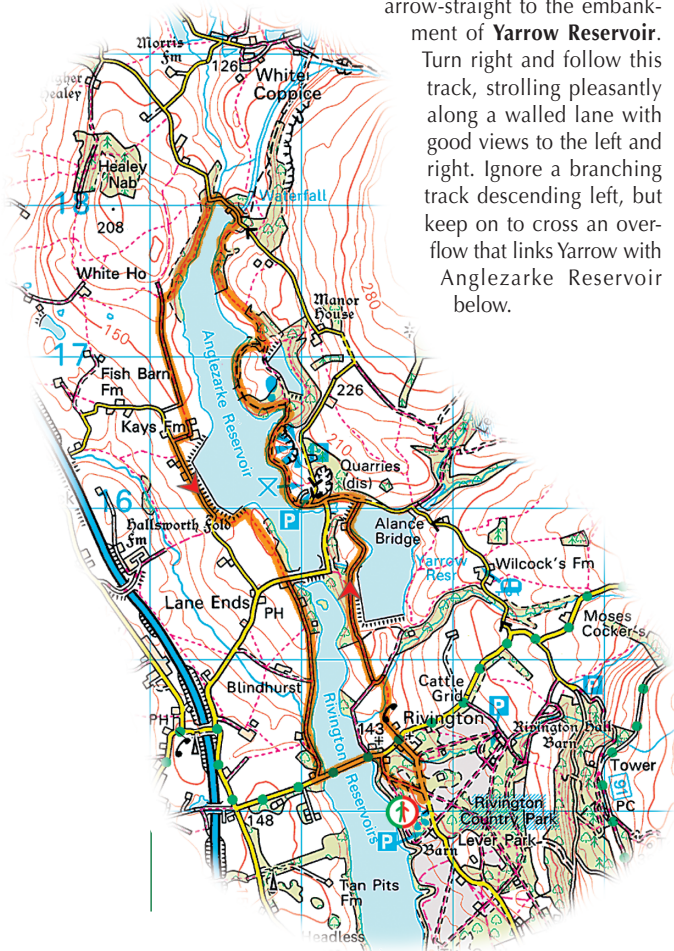
The **Unitarian Chapel** in Rivington is interesting; it was founded in 1662, and the chapel built in 1703. In its grounds, on either side of the path, there are some interesting date-stones from the 17th and 18th centuries. Here and in the chapel house beyond, the followers of American poet Walt Whitman (1819–91), known as the ‘Eagle Street College’, celebrated his life and works.

Pass the stocks, keeping them on your left in order to locate and descend a brief flight of steps in a retaining wall, and cross the road to a kissing-gate. Beyond the gate lies a wide, sloping meadow with a grassy path keeping close by the right-hand fence to reach a longer set of steps. These lead down across a stream to a path

going right between fences and along the line of **Dean Brook**. Stay with this path to its end, at a junction with a broader trail.

Go sharp left here, crossing Dean Brook, and ascending gently for a short distance to reach the end of a broad track, on the right, running arrow-straight to the embankment of **Yarrow Reservoir**.

Turn right and follow this track, strolling pleasantly along a walled lane with good views to the left and right. Ignore a branching track descending left, but keep on to cross an overflow that links Yarrow with Anglezarke Reservoir below.



*Anglezarke Reservoir*

Just before the overflow bridge, one of the capping stones in the wall on the right has been carved, by a reservoir construction worker, into the **likeness of a face**, allegedly the works foreman. It is not easy to find because over the years it has been rather defaced.

Beyond the bridge, the track continues beside gorse-bearing embankments to give a fine view, right, over Yarrow Reservoir to the distant pincushion of Winter Hill and its clutter of masts. Eventually, the track runs out to a road, and here you turn left, descending the road with care to a junction. Turn right, still following a road, until, at the first opportunity, you can leave it, left, to pursue the **Anglezarke Woodland Trail**.

There are a number of possibilities for circular tours along the trail, but for our purposes, begin by keeping left, through a gate near the entrance to the car park. This takes you down a surfaced track at the edge of **Anglezarke**



Leicester Mill Quarry provided stone for building and road construction throughout the northwest. Indeed, many of the streets of Manchester are paved with stone from the Anglezarke quarries.

**Reservoir**, and past side paths that lead, for the curious, into **Leicester Mill Quarry**. ◀

Further on, the track changes direction to move round a small inlet below **High Bullough Reservoir**. As the road climbs on the other side, leave it, as it swings to the right, by branching left on the apex, to follow a delightful woodland path around the edges of **Brook House Plantation**.

**High Bullough Reservoir** was the first reservoir to be constructed in the area, in 1850, to supply drinking water to Chorley. The link with the main reservoir system is no longer used, and the reservoir is given over to visiting wildfowl, notably goldeneye and grebe.

**Brook House Plantation** was planted in the 1870s, and contains many beech and oak trees that date from that time. The beech provides food for great tits, chaffinches and squirrels, but the tree canopy is quite dense, and prevents light penetrating to the woodland floor, thus minimising the development of undergrowth and providing poor conditions for wild flowers.

The on-going route is never in doubt, and finally descends to a junction of pathways, where the Woodland Trail turns right. Here, leave the trail and go left on a path that heads to a kissing-gate, and then across meadows at the northern end of Anglezarke Reservoir. At one point the way climbs along a narrow path above steep embankments, before finally running out to meet a road at a gate/stile.

Go left along a roadside footpath, passing **Heapey Waterman's Cottage**, and then crossing the northern end of Anglezarke Reservoir. On the far side, as the road bends right, a stile in a corner gives access to two footpaths, one of which, the one to follow, sets off down the western side of the reservoir, through pleasant woodland that is often alive with birdsong.

The path is muddy in places, but finally rises to a stile over a fence. Go ahead, and slightly left, to gain a broad track, running left for about 0.5km (¼ mile) to the group

of houses at **Kays Farm**. When you meet their access road, turn right and walk out to a back lane.

Go left along the lane for about 400m until you can leave it, left, to follow a path, initially wet, around a small headland. ▶ Continue on a good path to reach the road that crosses between Anglezarke and **Upper Rivington reservoirs**.

Cross the road and go down a broad lane opposite. Follow this for a little over 1km until you emerge at the far end onto **Horrobin Lane**. Turn left and walk down between Upper and Lower Rivington reservoirs until, just after you have passed the church (on your left), you can turn right by the school onto a track that leads to a car park. A short distance further on, branch left to return to the starting point.

The headland is splendid place for a rest, overlooking the reservoir and the quarries beyond.

*Around Anglezarke Reservoir*



## WALK 2

*Rivington Moor and Winter Hill*

<b>Start/Finish</b>	Car park, opposite Horwich and Blackrod High School (SD634128)
<b>Distance</b>	10.5km (6½ miles)
<b>Height gain</b>	360m (1180ft)
<b>Terrain</b>	Good tracks; some upland paths

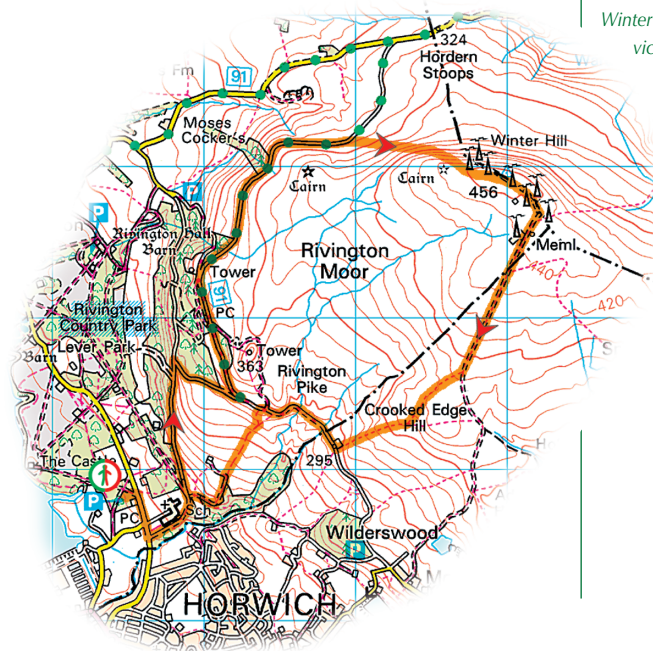
Winter Hill (456m/1496ft) is the highest point of the West Pennine Moors, and it – or often more precisely the towering mast on its summit – is in view from almost every walk in this book. As with many walks on the moors, there are numerous ways of reaching Winter Hill. This route begins in Rivington Country Park, and offers optional add-ons that have not been included in the calculations of distance and height gain, but which will not significantly add to the day's tally.

Begin from the car park by walking out to the road and turning right to pass Horwich and Blackrod High School. Having crossed the entrance to the school, take the next turning on the left, a narrow, surfaced lane that runs up beside the school.

When you meet two wide, stony tracks branching off to the left, turn towards them, and then take the rising one on the right – you will return by the track you have just abandoned. Follow the right-hand track as it rises gently towards woodland far ahead. In due course, you pass another rising track coming up from the left, and a short way further on reach the edge of the woodland. The measured route turns sharply to the right here.



*Winter Hill from the vicinity of Lead Mines Clough*





**Option** You have the choice of going forward into the woodland, where you will find numerous pathways that take you round Lord Leverhulme's garden terraces. You can explore freely, but you will either have to retreat to the point where you entered the woodland, or find the track that leads up to the dovecote (SD639143) on the moorland road above.

Back on the main route, follow the stony track gently upwards to meet another, even wider track close by **Rivington Pike**.

*Dovecote, Rivington*



**Option** There is another optional add-on here, which allows you to go up to the pike. To do this, turn right for a short distance until you reach a clear track on the left, through a gate, leading up to the pike, from which a continuing path drops down the other side and rejoins the main track.

On reaching the broad track, turn left, and follow this to the dovecote. Now take the continuing track, known as **Belmont Road**, that contours around the northwestern edge of **Rivington Moor**. ►

Now continue along Belmont Road for some distance until you reach a very obvious and large stile on the right, giving onto a boggy path that can be seen curving up and across the northern face of **Winter Hill**. Follow this path upwards, and finally you arrive at the hotch-potch of ironmongery on the summit. A surfaced service road is soon reached, and you should take this, as it now heads down across Smithills Moor.

This part of the walk is shared with Walk 7, onto Noon Hill Slack, which is another add-on, if you have the time.

### WINTER HILL

Among the many radar communication masts on Winter Hill, one stands way above the others, reaching 300m (1000ft) into the sky. This towering transmitter is host to antennae that send analogue and digital terrestrial television and radio into millions of homes in the northwest of England.

Close by, the top of Winter Hill was the scene of an air accident on 27 February 1958, when, coping with heavy fog and snow, a flight from Douglas in the Isle of Man to Manchester crashed into the top of the hill. Only seven of the 42 on board survived. This was not the only air disaster on Winter Hill; there have been several. A two-seater aircraft crashed here in the 1920s. During the Second World War an American aircraft crashed on 7 August 1942, and in the following year, on 12 November 1943, the crew of a Wellington Bomber were killed when it crashed on Hurst Hill, on Anglezarke Moor (see Walk 9). In the following month, on 24 December 1943, an Airspeed Oxford crashed on the hill. Other crashes have included several Spitfires, Hurricanes and a Gloster Meteor, which crashed in 1953. ►

In September 1965 a De Havilland Chipmunk flew into the hill in cloud, without serious injury to the crew. The last crash occurred in October 1968, when a Cessna force-landed between Winter Hill and Rivington Pike.

On the way down, you pass a solitary pillar on the left; this is **Scotsman's Stump**.

### SCOTSMAN'S STUMP

Sometimes called Scotchman's Stump, this pillar is a commemoration of the death of George Henderson, a 20-year-old pedlar from Annan in Dumfriesshire, and in the service of Mr Jardine, a draper of Blackburn. Henderson was murdered nearby on 9 November 1838. At a local beer house where he was a regular visitor, Henderson met another traveller, by the name of Birrell. On the morning of 9 November, Birrell arrived first and waited for an hour before deciding to leave. When Henderson did arrive, he had a beer and left around midday. A short while later, a local boy found Henderson badly wounded in the head, and ran for help. Henderson was returned to the beer house, but died a few hours later.

As reported in the Bolton Chronicle in 1839, James Whittle, aged 22, a collier who lived on Scout Road at Belmont, and who had been seen on the moors carrying a gun, was charged with the murder. Conflicting accounts suggest that Whittle had to face two trials: the first, at Liverpool Crown Court, finding him guilty of murder, but the second at Lancaster acquitting him. Another account tells that Whittle was found not guilty at the Liverpool Court. No one was ever convicted, and the crime still awaits diligent research into court proceedings, and the attentions of a 'cold case squad'.



*Scotsman's Stump*

As you follow the surfaced road down from the moor, keep an eye open for a chance to leave it, as it bends to the



*Rivington Pike from the Belmont Road*

left, by taking to a broad path on the right and maintaining the original direction. This leads down to rugged Belmont Road, close by **Pike Cottage**, which has seen service in a number of guises, including as a café and kennels.

Turn right onto Belmont Road, and follow it to the track on the right that leads up to Rivington Pike. Just here, leave Belmont Road, and go through a gate on the left to descend sloping farm pastures above **Higher Knoll Farm**. Head down to join the farm access, now surfaced, and follow this down to reach the lane at the rear of the high school, used at the start of the walk, and follow this back to the start.

## WALK 3

### *Wilderswood and the edge of Rivington Moor*

<b>Start/Finish</b>	Car park, opposite Horwich and Blackrod High School (SD635128)
<b>Distance</b>	8km (5 miles)
<b>Height gain</b>	312m (1024ft)
<b>Terrain</b>	Generally good paths throughout; moorland fringe; often rough underfoot