

THE WALK

SHORT days, inclement weather and all the distractions of the Christmas season can put you off getting outside and enjoying the countryside. This need not be the case. Lancashire has much to offer as an antidote to shopping and over indulgence. We start a new series of walks with a short stroll that follows the shores of Entwistle and Turton Reservoir tucked in the hills of the West Pennine Moors. As well as being suitable for the whole family, both young and young at heart, the abundance of waterfowl provides an added attraction.

THE WALK

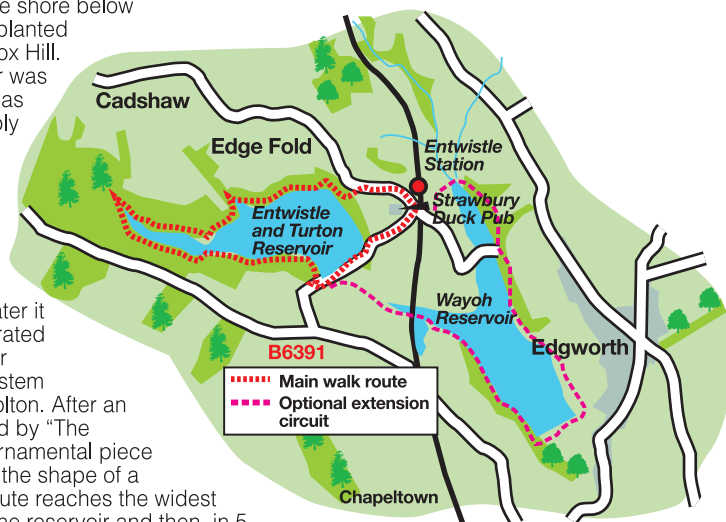
From car park (either upper or lower) drop down to south corner of reservoir and the shoreline track. Turn left. You are now on a section of the Witton Weavers Way, a recreational path, which in four routes explores the rural and industrial heritage of this part of Lancashire. This section of it is in fact "the Wappers Trail". With the reservoir on your right follow the track. After 10 minutes the reservoir narrows into a long arm with Fox Hill Plantation on the opposite shore. Here the landscape becomes somewhat reminiscent of a Scottish glen as the way takes you towards steep-sided Yarnsdale. At the end of the reservoir part company with the Witton Weaver Way as you cross the wooden bridge over a feeder stream and turn right. The path hugs the shore below the densely planted conifers of Fox Hill.

The reservoir was built in 1834 as a water supply for the mills and bleach works along Bradshaw Brook further down the valley. Later it was incorporated into the water collection system supplying Bolton. After an inlet heralded by "The Wader" an ornamental piece of artwork in the shape of a heron, the route reaches the widest expanse of the reservoir and then, in 5 minutes turns right close to a memorial bench. 170m after this turn look for a path on the left going up through the trees. This path is not sign posted and is easily missed. A moment of decision has arrived. The walk can be curtailed by continuing along the shore and turning right onto a service road as it crosses the dam end of the reservoir. This will quickly return you to the car park. However if you still have room for refreshment after the excesses of Christmas, then take this path on the left. It rises to a more substantial track where you are briefly reunited with the Witton Weavers Way on what is called Edge Lane. More importantly you will arrive at the Strawbury Duck. This free house, once called the Station Hotel, offers a wide selection of pub grub and has a warm and welcoming atmosphere.



IMPRESSIVE: Entwistle Reservoir

Shore thing



To return to the reservoir you can either retrace your steps down Edge Lane, or take the lane leading behind the pub (Overshores Road) and puts you on a track that descends past a camping barn to the service road across the dam. If you still have calories to burn you can extend the walk by completing a circuit of nearby Wayoh reservoir. (An extra 2.5m or 4k, allow 1 hour). Cross the railway bridge and follow the road as it swings right. In a little over 50m take a footpath on the left leading downhill to woods. Keep on this path and soon you will come to the north end of Wayoh reservoir. From here you can either complete a circuit or else once on its western side take a more direct route to the car park by following a concessionary path leading beneath a railway viaduct.



PUB GRUB: The Strawbury Duck

FACTFILE

Start: Batridge Barn Car park, Entwistle and Turton Reservoir. From M65 jct4, on reaching the A666 turn left into Darwen. Beyond the town in a little under 2 miles, take the B6391 Green Arms Road on the left towards Turton. After 1.5 miles turn left again into a lane leading down to the car park.

Distance: 5 k 3 m

Ascent: 80m

Time: 1.5 hours

Terrain: Very easy shoreline amble with a short climb to Entwistle. Nonetheless waterproofs and suitable footwear are recommended.

Map: OS Explorer 287 West Pennine Moors

■ Walk by John Griffiths and Bob Clare. For more walks exploring the diversity of the Lancashire countryside hit www.lancashirewalks.com



COUNTRYDIARY

with Jack Benson

When I met a couple of downcast locals on their way home from Blackpool's defeat by Preston North End, I treated them to my "when I were a lad" repertoire. I thought it might cheer them up. It didn't seem to, but I persevered. The Pool v PNE matches of my youth were invariably a sell-out and some 32,000 people would be crammed into Bloomfield Road. Incredibly by today's standards, Blackpool and Preston fans would be packed together on Spion Kop an hour before the kick-off, whirling their great wooden rattles above their heads and exchanging amiable insults. A modern health and safety official might swoon at the thought, but I don't recall any casualties.

There was a police presence of course. Around a dozen officers patrolled the perimeter, much envied because they got in for nowt whilst we had to pay. There were children too. If the pressure grew too heavy they would be passed carefully over the heads of the crowd to the safety of the touchline, to be reunited with their parents at the end of the game.

Then there were the players. I recall a cricket match at Great Eccleston. Soon after the start, England's right winger and inside right strolled on to the ground together in the form of Stan Matthews and Stan Mortensen. The two footballing legends responded cheerfully to a little ribbing from spectators, then settled down to watch the match in peace.

A chap called LP Hartley once said, "The past is another country; they do things differently there." Don't they just!

As a lanky, spotty, bespectacled youth, I went to Wembley with a coach load from the village to see the 1953 "Matthews Final". There we were, all dressed up in our best – and only – suits, hair and boots greased and gleaming. Our tickets were for different parts of the stadium. Forward planning was needed. We called on the older, more sophisticated heads amongst us and they came up with a plan. At the end of the game we would meet by the side of a distinctive, crane-like structure standing close to an exit.

It was a good plan but not perfect. The crane-like structure was one of several. And it was mobile and about to be moved.

For some time after the game, officials were entertained by the sight of bewildered yokels wandering like sheep in search of a flock. The place was quite empty by the time we were all gathered in.

One local chap enjoyed his football immensely but his wife wasn't enthusiastic. "It's all right for you," she grumbled. "Off watching football with your mates and coming back smelling of ale. You never give a moment's thought to me slaving over a hot stove."

"Oh I do," protested her husband (who was a North End supporter). "I laid awake for three hours last night wondering what you'd put in that pie."

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