



Starts: Hartshead Church

Ends: Oakwell Hall, Birstall

Length: Four and a half miles.

Leaving Hartshead Church on the left walk to the junction to cross main road (Windybank Lane) and continue straight across into Hare Park Lane.

Almost immediately the Quaker Burial Ground, punctuated with trees, is reached on the right. It was here that Quakers, refused burial in the local churchyard in 1665, were interred on their own land. The land became known as The Sepulchre. A Quaker meeting house was built in 1770 in nearby Hightown.

Having passed the burial ground the road bends sharp left but walkers should take the tarmac lane to the right. Continue down the lane to Upper House Farm. Using a stile at the side of main gate, go straight ahead through farmyard to a gap by a wooden fence, along the ginnel and through a metal gate into a field.

Continue forward along the field edge as far as an old gate in the wall. At the marker post beside it turn left and go

straight across the field, passing just to the right of an isolated tree, to reach the stile which leads into the wood. Cross stile but take care when using the steep earthen path which heads downwards towards a wooden footbridge over the stream.

Cross the bridge and go up the banking opposite via two sets of wooden steps to reach another stile.

Go diagonally right across the field, head for the top corner and keep houses on the right. Having done so pass through gate into Clough Lane.

Turn left, continue up the road to the T-junction and cross the road, Halifax Road, to take a look at the stone built house opposite.

As it says on a plaque above the door this is the house where the Rev Patrick Brontë (father of the famous Brontë sisters) brought his new bride Maria Branwell after their marriage on December 12, 1812. And it was in this house where two of their daughters – Maria and Elizabeth – were born.

After viewing the plaque turn right, continue for about 100 yards before turning left into Quaker Lane. Continue along until the lane narrows alongside two adjoining houses, numbers 20 and 22.

Take footpath to the right of them (its start is marked by lamppost numbered 19) and continue forward along the wall and hedge until the path reaches a T-junction. Turn right and follow track until it turns sharply to the left. Ignore the first opening to the right on the bend but turn right a few yards further along by a marker post. Within a short distance a kissing gate is reached and beyond are two tracks running on either side of a fence. Take either track and at the end there is an option.

Walkers can decide to either turn right, go slightly downhill and then left under a disused railway bridge or take a slight diversion to view some modern art.

To do so climb up the old railway embankment straight ahead to reach the Spen Valley Greenway. Turn right, walk over the bridge, continue along the

Greenway and pass some extraordinary metal sheep. Just before a metal bench leave the Greenway by turning right, going downhill and then turning right again to re-join the route under railway tunnel No 15.

Veer right and continue along path as it is bounded on the right firstly by a wood and metal fence and later by a long brick wall. It continues downhill to eventually reach a stile. Climb over, ascend a flight of steps, cross the path and descend another flight of steps. Having done so turn right and then left to cross a bridge and reach a service road, Cartwright Street. Continue straight ahead to reach the main road between Heckmondwike and Cleckheaton.

Here the walker, inquisitive about local towns, might like to walk the comparatively short distance leftwards to find Cleckheaton town centre, discover the Town Hall and Memorial Park.

The prescribed walk, however, crosses the main road and enters Royds Park opposite. Having passed through the gateway turn immediately right and



Oakwell Hall at Birstall, a remarkable building with delightful grounds.

follow the path which runs around the bowling green and heads uphill. Ignore first right hand footpath which leads to a children's playground but take second right hand path at the top of the rise. Almost immediately turn left and walk up the grass banking to a stile leading to a sloping field.

Cross stile and keep to right hand side while climbing field to reach another stile at the top.

Cross this and follow the level footpath (Spenn Valley Heritage Trail) to reach a stile on the left.

Cross, climb straight up a field towards a wall corner. There is a wind turbine on the right. At the top there are great all-round views but keep on in the same direction and pass through two stile-like gates along the path to reach Little Gomersal.

Alternative route in the event of Royds Park gates being closed: Walk to the right along Bradford Road towards Heckmondwike, pass Eddercliff Grange and turn left up Eddercliff Crescent to rejoin the route at the stile.

On reaching the road turn right, pass The Wheatsheaf public house and then follow the road as it bears left to reach Lower Lane. Keep left around the village memorial, cross the road to pavement on the right and then take footpath to the right immediately beyond cream coloured house.

Follow path through woodland bearing left and head for left hand corner of football field at the top. Go to the outside edge of this field and follow footpath the full width of the football field. At the end of the field turn left and walk down steep hill to gap and road.

Turn right on road, walk on Nibshaw Lane to footpath sign on lamp post and then diagonally across a rectangular football field on the left to reach its far corner.

Descend a flight of steps to join a footpath with fence on both sides which heads towards a pylon and the road. Cross the road and continue along Fusden Lane to the end where it meets Cliff Lane. Turn right at the junction, cross the road and after about 100 yards take the signed broad track on the left.

At the end the tarmac track divides. The left goes into the building known as Holmefield and the track on the right – the one which continues the route – passes the entrance to Fan Wood Camp Site on the left and continues upwards to reach Gomersal Methodist Church

known, because of its shape, as the Pork Pie chapel.

The chapel was built as a Wesleyan Chapel in 1827 and is now part of a conservation area. It was re-opened in February 2012 after an interior and exterior refurbishment scheme which preserved and highlighted its original features.

At the road junction (with the chapel on the left) turn right on Latham Lane, pass the West End public house and turn left down West Street and right along Grove Lane.

Keep straight ahead across the road to reach a footpath and after 50 yards or so turn left through a gap in the wall into a field. Continue straight ahead to a car park and find, on the right, a gate which leads to Red House Museum and its grounds which contain toilets.

The red brick house was built in the 1600s and, for many years, was the home of the Taylor family, cloth merchants and manufacturers, whose number included Mary Taylor, long standing friend of Charlotte Brontë. It is believed that

Charlotte modelled Briarmains in her novel Shirley on the surroundings she found at Red House. The house has been a museum for many years and is a winner of the Interpret Britain Award.

Leaving Red House by the same gate as entry was gained head across the car park towards Gomersal Public Hall and then cross the road to reach the village school. Turn left and continue along the pavement until reaching Scott Lane on the right. Go down Scott Lane, bear right, and along the paved road to its end to reach a ginnel on the right.

Follow the path which leads to a large field. Walk diagonally right across it to reach a kissing gate at its centrepiece. Go through this and then straight ahead along the footpath across two more fields to reach a lane which eventually links with Monk Ings.

Continue until reaching Bradford Road. Cross the road and head for the Public Bridleway immediately opposite alongside Pear Tree Cottage. Its garden was home to a pear tree planted in 1837 to commemorate the coronation of Queen Victoria.

Head up the bridleway from the cottage to Oakwell House and then cross Nova Lane to enter the grounds of Oakwell Hall and the upper car park to complete this section.

Oakwell Hall is an Elizabethan manor house which also influenced Charlotte Brontë's writings in that it was featured as "Fieldhead" in her novel Shirley.

The hall was built by the Batt family – nothing to do with Batley – in 1583 and was a centre of power for many years to come. It has been used as a family home, a school and also a place of hiding by soldiers fleeing from the Battle of Adwalton Moor – civil war battle between Royalists and Cromwellians – in 1643.

That is the end of Section 4. To catch a bus it is best to walk down Nova Lane to Birstall Market Place.

