

1 Rawtenstall and Cribden Hill

Explore Pennine Lancashire and visit the Halo Panopticon up on Top O' Slate

START: The Whitaker museum and gallery (GPS waypoint SD 805 226)

DISTANCE: 5 miles (8km)

DIFFICULTY: 🏃 **HEIGHT GAIN:** 📈

APPROX. TIME: 2 hours 30 minutes

PARKING: Available at The Whitaker museum off Haslingden Road and also at the north end of the park off Haslingden Old Road.

ROUTE TERRAIN: Tarmac paths, tracks, hillside grass paths

FACILITIES: Toilets and refreshments available at Whitaker Park

SUITABILITY: Not suitable for prams or wheelchairs, dogs allowed but must be kept under control around livestock

OS MAPS: Landranger 103 (Blackburn and Burnley), Explorer OL21 (South Pennines)





Starting from The Whitaker museum, this walk takes you through Rossendale and Haslingden, via the Halo – a striking Panopticon that can be seen from miles around.

There are stunning views most of the way around this walk and especially from Cribden Hill, so make sure you stop from time to time and really take them in.

Dogs are permitted along this route, but four-legged friends must be kept on a lead around livestock. There are also stiles to navigate, which may prove difficult for larger pets.

The Whitaker museum, formerly Rossendale Museum and Art Gallery, is located in the town of Rawtenstall at the centre of the Rossendale Valley. The town is to the north of Manchester and east of Preston, and nearby towns include Bacup, Haslingden and Ramsbottom.

There are two theories when it comes to where the name Rawtenstall came from. One of them is that the name is a combination of the Middle English 'routen', meaning to roar or bellow, and the Old English 'stall', meaning 'pool in a river'. The other more recent reason is related to Rawtenstall's history

as a cattle farm and combines the Old English 'ruh', meaning 'rough' and 'tun-stall', meaning 'the site of a farm'.

The earliest settlement at Rawtenstall is said to have been during the medieval period, when it formed part of the Forest of Rossendale, and consisted of simple dwellings for servants and animals. More substantial buildings then followed in the 15th and 16th centuries with the corn and flour mills.

As with many towns in East Lancashire, Rawtenstall entered a major period of growth during the Industrial Revolution, with new mills built to process cotton. During this period, a man called David Whitehead and his brother became important entrepreneurs in the town, constructing a number of mills, including one of the earliest mills in the valley, at Lower Mill, and the still existing Ilex Mill.

The brothers also built houses for themselves at Holly Mount, as well as large numbers of terraced houses for their workers. The population of Rawtenstall quadrupled in the first half of the 19th century, and other industries active in this period included quarrying and small scale coal mining, as well as an expanding commercial sector. The population declined in the town during the 20th century, with the 1911 census stating that there were 30,000 inhabitants, with this number falling to 21,500 in the 1971 census.

This walk starts and ends at The Whitaker, which is a museum and art gallery set in beautiful parkland. The Whitaker was originally built as a residence for former mill owner, George Hardman in 1840. This home, named Oak House, sat among an estate of more than 28 acres, with cottages and farms in the grounds.

George Hardman was a trader in the wool industry, having become a partner at the Hoyle and Ashworth New Hall Hey Mill. In 1849 the company became George Hardman and Son, after the old company was dissolved. In 1852, following the death of George Hardman, the company was taken over by his three sons, and Oak House and estate were eventually sold on in 1896 to the Whitaker family.

Richard Whitaker came from Rawtenstall and was a self-made man who had entered work at the age of six. For a time he had worked at George Hardman's mill and rose through the ranks to managerial level. Richard Whitaker never forgot his background though, and bought the Oak House estate with the intention of creating parks and playgrounds for the people of Rossendale.

In 1902 his plans came to fruition, with a grand opening for the people of Rossendale, who were able to enjoy the playgrounds, ornamental gardens and paths, including the fountain that still stands in front of the museum. The museum opened later the same year.

The museum now has diverse collections, including fine art, decorative art and furniture, ceramics, glassware, archaeology, geology, natural history, costumes and textiles, local social history, arms and weaponry.

Getting there

Rawtenstall is never far from a motorway connection and it is easy to get to and from by car. Set in the centre of a triangle formed by the Lancashire towns of Blackburn, Burnley and Bury, the M66 is around six miles away, the M65 is 10 miles away and the M60/M62 is 16 miles away.

If you're looking to travel to Rawtenstall by public transport, there are regular buses from nearby Rawtenstall bus station, which is on Bacup Road. Destinations served include Blackburn, Accrington, Burnley, Rochdale, Bury and Bolton.

The East Lancashire Railway also runs between Rawtenstall, Bury and Heywood, but this service doesn't run at all times during the week, so it's best to check before you travel via the East Lancashire Railway website – www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

Where to visit

The Whitaker

Whitaker Park Haslingden Road, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 6RE

We'd definitely recommend popping into The Whitaker museum and art gallery while you're in the vicinity for this walk. The route starts and ends here, so it's ideally located if you fancy having a look around.

The museum displays include interesting local history, paintings and Victorian natural history collections, plus there is also a very active contemporary art gallery with changing exhibitions.

The art gallery covers two of the main rooms on the first floor of the house. These are impressive rooms with views across the valley and, having been recently upgraded, they now provide a light, contemporary space, suitable for exploring and exhibiting the best new art.



Once you've explored the collections in the gallery and museum, it's bound to be time for something to eat and drink at the café! Whether it's hearty soups, gourmet sandwiches or indulgent cakes, everything's freshly made at the café – and you can enjoy your food while taking in the wonderful views out across the valley.

The team at The Whitaker also host a number of workshops and learning projects throughout the year, all delivered by experts with the aim of developing people's skills and knowledge around a diverse range of topics and specialisms.

The Whitaker is open Tuesday to Sunday, from 10am until 4pm, and you can find out more about the exhibitions by visiting www.thewhitaker.org

The walker's view



David Turner tests out this route

It was only last month that I was singing the praises of our Helmsshore walk just a few miles from this particular route, so I was glad to be back around the area this month for a walk up and around Cribden Hill.

Beginning from The Whitaker museum in Whitaker Park, there's certainly no shortage of things to keep you amused. As well as the museum there's also a gallery and a small café, and the park features a bowling green, basketball court and children's play area, along with numerous other facilities. Although it was quiet in the morning as I began my walk, by the time I returned the place was buzzing with activity in all corners. It was great to see so many people enjoying the park on this hot summers day.



The track at the base of Cribden Hill is where I got my first big views of the surrounding hills and towns. In the distance, the wind farm on top of Scout Moor rose up behind Cowpe Lowe, and the towns of Rawtenstall and Helmsshore can be seen below.

A short walk down the track leads to Top O' Slate and another of the Lancashire Panopticons, Halo. Having already visited Atom in

Wycoller and Singing Ringing Tree on the hills above Burnley, I was glad to get the chance to bag a third Panopticon. This unusual structure resembles a tubular flying saucer and is quite a sight when you first round the corner towards it. It was an excellent place for a spot of geocaching and I spent some time hunting around the area for a cache I knew to be close by. After taking more than a few photos for what was fast becoming small collection of Panopticon images, I continued on towards the side of Cribden Hill.

There are two tracks along the spine of the hill and, while I was sure I was following the path on the 'correct' side of the wall according to the OS map, I did notice another path on the other side. If you do find yourself on this path then not to worry, it appears to lead to exactly the same place as the one I was following and you shouldn't go wrong.

There are great views to be had from the top of Cribden Hill, especially over to the numerous wind farms that sit on the distant hills. Take care on the descent though, the path is steep for a short while but soon evens out for the return journey back to Whitaker Park.

Geocaching in Rawtenstall and Cribden Hill



David Turner headed to East Lancashire to test this walking route out, but while he was there he also had time to do a bit of geocaching. This time, he managed to find five caches, one of which was hidden in a very ingenious place.

Please remember to respect the environment when out geocaching and take care not to disturb any local wildlife. If you're worried about the location of a cache and its vicinity to nesting birds or rare habitat, contact the cache's owner via the geocaching website – www.geocaching.com

Cache 1 - Bessies paw prints 6 - Bath time (GC54Z1K)

Numerous old bathtubs lined the track on the other side of the fence as I made my way up to this first cache. It's not as ugly as it might sound though; I think it might be some sort of water feature judging by the way they're arranged. Some poking around in the bank and a few nettle stings later I saw this fellow looking up at me. An unusual container for my first find of the day!



1

Cache 2- Sign of an angel (GC2BGXE)

The co-ordinates on this cache are a bit off the mark. I'd recommend you read the clue, even if you don't usually, as the container is hidden a short distance away from where your GPS unit is likely to point you.

Despite the fine weather, all was quiet beside the Panopticon, Halo. I spent some time hunting around a particular location without success, but after reading the clue again and looking around the immediate area, I soon spotted another place where the cache could be. Sure enough I soon had it in hand. There were quite a lot of items in this cache and once I'd removed them to take a picture, I had a hard time trying to fit everything back in. I signed the log and took a few more photographs of Halo before continuing on.



2

Cache 3 - Bessies paw prints 4 - Blanket skylarks lapwing (GC55AN9)

By the time you've reached this cache at the top of Cribden Hill, the views around you really open up in all directions. As I arrived at the co-ordinates the only obvious hiding place seemed to be on the other side of the fence. I managed to walk on a bit further and got over to the other side, before doubling back to the cache location. I soon found the cache, which contained a few swappable items and a logbook.



3



Rawtenstall and Cribden Hill geocache locations



4

Cache 5 - Who nicked m'pillar? (GCX4TT)

This cache was also on the opposite side of the wall to where I was originally walking; anyone approaching from the western side of the hill will be fine though. I had a peek at the clue for this one, but I must admit I didn't really understand it. Luckily the co-ordinates are accurate enough and once at the location there were only a few places that it could have been hidden. The cache was a bit damp unfortunately, but the contents seemed to be more or less in order, with a few swaps on offer too.



5

Cache 6 - Bessies paw prints 5 - 234-109 (GC54Z1D)

It's always great to find a really quirky cache – one that's been thought out and craftily hidden. Let's face it, anyone can hide a plastic snap lock box under a few rocks, but the memorable caches are those that make use of their surroundings and don't just require you to flip rocks and stones for 10 minutes until it reveals itself. This was one such memorable cache.

The clue indicates that you might need a tool to get at it but I managed just fine once I'd spotted the hiding place. There was only room for a tiny logbook in this cache but what a great hiding place! ➤

While you are there!

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The Shoe Trail

If you're looking to spend the day here or want to extend your walk route, there's The Shoe Trail to explore, which hits the outskirts of the town, and also goes through Whitaker Park.

The trail celebrates Rossendale's famous shoe industry and the route is waymarked by 28 giant clay shoes, designed by local school children. Clay was used because the site of the Halo at Top O' Slate was once a clay pit, supplying many nearby brick factories.

The route is approximately two miles long and runs from the East Lancashire Railway at Rawtenstall to the Panopticon Halo at Haslingden. There's one steep incline at one point and you should allow an hour to walk the whole trail.



The Irwell Sculpture Trail

The Irwell Sculpture Trail is one of the largest public art schemes in the UK. Initially funded in 1997, the trail has included commissions from local, national and international artists over a 33-mile trail, running from Rossendale, through Bury and into Salford.

The Irwell Sculpture Trail also runs through Rawtenstall and two of the sculptures are located there; the Gateway and the Bocholt Tree. The latter, by sculptor Bernard Tindall, is located beside the main Rawtenstall roundabout, and celebrates Rossendale's links

with its German twin-town of Bocholt. The sculpture is a symbol of unity between the people of Rossendale and Bocholt, whose civic symbol is the tree.

Meanwhile, The Gateway can be found on the East Lancashire Railway in Rawtenstall. To create it, railway lines were shaped to form the archway of the gates, and steel panels were cut with images of steam train wheels to reflect the railway and the history of the local area.

Halo Panopticon

It's hard to miss the stunning Halo Panopticon as you make your way over Top O' Slate. Part of the Panopticons project, Halo was the last of the series – which also includes Atom in Pendle, Colourfields, and the Singing Ringing Tree – to be erected.

Halo was designed by John Kennedy of LandLab and is an 18 metre diameter steel structure, supported on a tripod five metres about the ground. The core is open at the top, framing views of the sky, and what's unique about this structure is that it glows sky blue after dark, thanks to low-energy LEDs, giving the effect that it is hovering over the town.

The lighting, powered by an adjacent wind turbine, is designed to minimise light pollution and avoid any disruption to wildlife.

One of the central aims of the Panopticons project was to involve local people in enhancing their own surroundings. In Rossendale and the surrounding areas, local people worked with professional artists to create a unique 'shoe trail' leading from Rawtenstall to the Halo site, a time capsule, a story-writing competition, a series of public walks, and organised a celebratory event to welcome the Halo structure.



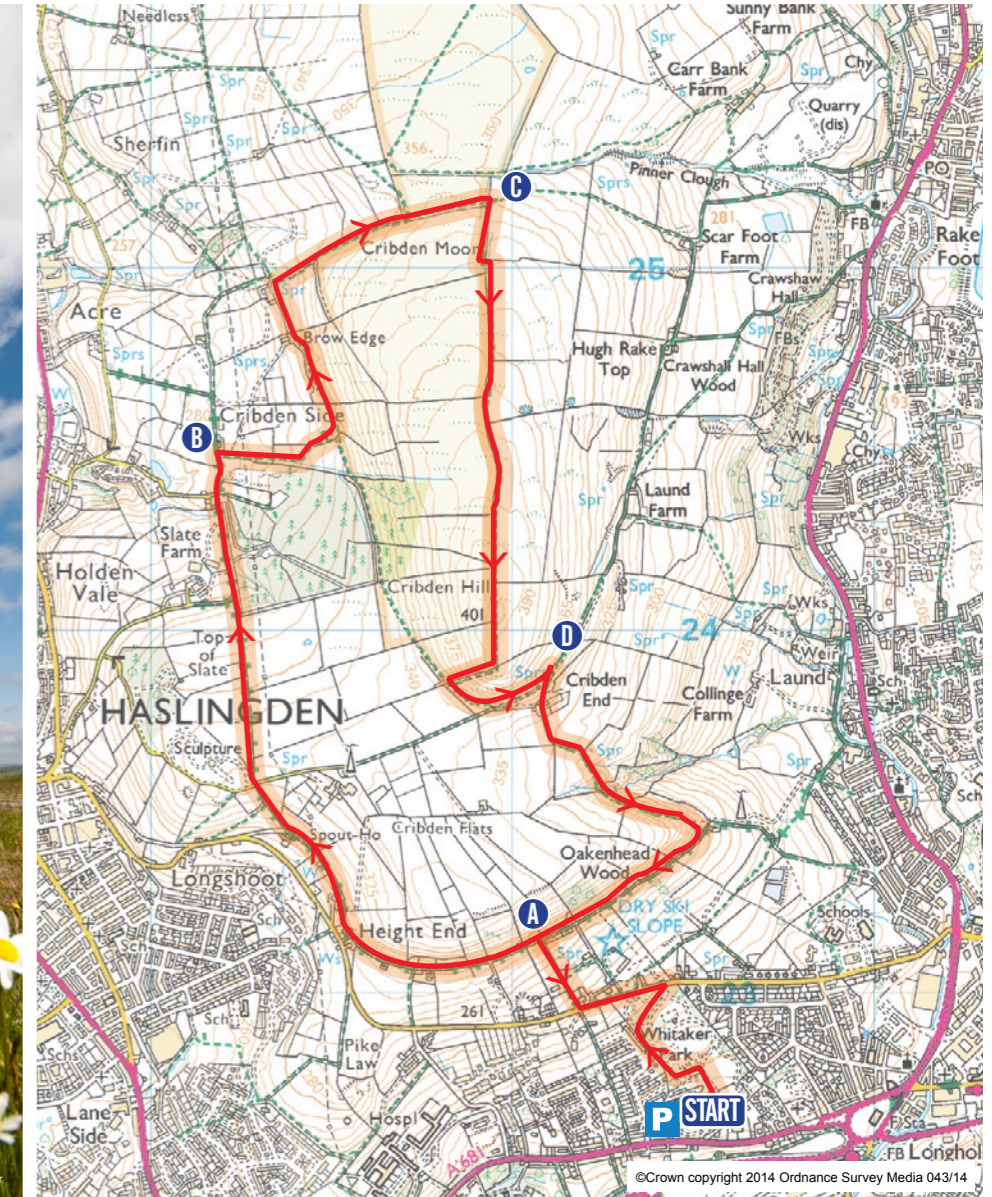
Cut out this page and take with you...

1 Rawtenstall and Cribden Hill

WHITAKER PARK, HASLINGDEN ROAD, RAWTENSTALL, ROSSENDALE, LANCASHIRE, BB4 6RE

Take a trip to the east of our county for this walk, which takes you from Rawtenstall to Haslingden and up to the Halo.

Dogs are permitted but need to be kept under control around livestock.



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OS MAPS: Landranger 103 (Blackburn and Burnley), Explorer OL21 (South Pennines)



1 Your walk, step-by-step

START From the museum car park, make your way around the back of the museum and up the hill, passing the basketball court on your right. Keep left at the fork to pass the northern car park and emerge onto Haslingden Old Road. Cross over and turn left along the road. Ignore the first public footpath on the right and instead carry on to the second, which leads to the right and up a tarmac drive.

Stay right at the house and follow the wall up the steep hill to emerge onto a track. **A** Turn left and follow the track. When the path splits, keep right up the hill, passing the old bath tubs in the field on your left. Keep straight on at the top and continue to follow the path, which passes besides the information board for 'Top O' Slate'.



The path continues for a while before dropping down into the trees and passing over a small stream. At the road, cross over and continue along the path on the other side. Pass by the sign for Greenhouse Farm nursery then turn right through the wooden gate at the front of the building. **B** Carry on over the stile and then over a second and third stile a bit

further on. Make your way over to the left and towards the ruins of an old stone building and head around the back and through the metal gate.



Turn left and follow the fence line up past another footpath marker and along the side of the hill. Go through the gate and carry on before going over a wooden stile and down towards a house. Pass through the wooden gate on the right, which leads around the right side of the house and then over a stone stile. Continue on towards another farmhouse. After reaching the marker post, turn right and head straight up the hillside, roughly following the direction of the overhead lines.



At the top, pass over the stone stile beside the gate and carry on, keeping the wall on your left. Pass over a stile at the top. Look for the faint path in front of you. This path initially leads away from the fence line before bending to the right and running parallel to the fence over on your right.

"The ground around this section is boggy but sticking to the narrow path will help"

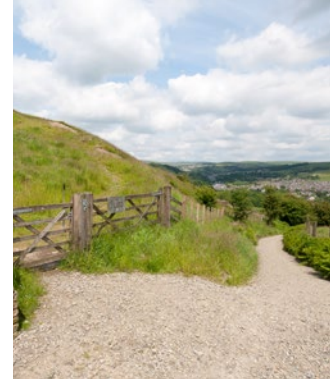
Carry on along the path to another stile set into the fence and go over. **C** Make your way up the hill alongside another stone wall. From this point the path is fairly obvious and continues to climb up along the top of the hill, passing through a number of stiles along the way, all the time following the central fence line that runs the length of the hill.



At the far side of the hill go over a small stile and turn right. Carefully make your way down the steep hillside along the wall to the bottom. Turn left at the bottom and follow the contour of the hill around to the left to a large footpath sign. Carry on along the path to another sign a bit further on and turn right and down towards the trees. **D** Pass through the wooden gate at the farm and bear left to pick up the path again on the other side of the yard.

Follow the path downwards and through a metal gate. Keep the

broken stone wall on your left after the gate and as the wall bends to the left, bear right to follow the remains of another old wall which leads off to the right and down towards another metal gate. Carry on along the footpath, which skirts the hillside before descending down to another gate and a track.



Go through the gate and turn right. Pass the dry ski slope on your left and eventually arrive at the place where you joined the track earlier in the walk. From this point, retrace your steps back down the hill to the road before turning left back towards The Whitaker museum.



Walk images provided by David Turner



David Turner

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