

8. Compo Country: Holmfirth & Thongsbridge

Duration: 1½ Hours

These two villages are located in the heart of Summer Wine Country. Holmfirth, of course, has been home to the cast of Last of the Summer Wine for over thirty years (first broadcast in 1973). Holmfirth and Thongsbridge, like many villages in Kirklees, grew up in the nineteenth century as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Mill owners, attracted by the availability of water to power their mills, built mills along the stretch of the River Holme which runs through both villages. However, the water which brought employment and prosperity also brought disaster, the villages being subjected to numerous floods, the worst being that of 1852 in which many people lost their lives. Indeed, while walking round Holmfirth, keep your eyes open for signs and monuments giving details of the various floods and the height the water reached.

This walk begins in the centre of **Holmfirth** where there are plenty of places to park, eat and shop.



Holmfirth town centre

Once you have parked, make your way to **Cooper Lane** which is just off the main A6024 Huddersfield Road. Walk up this rather steep lane. Even if you stop only halfway up, there is a tremendous view of Holmfirth centre nestling in the valley bottom. At the top of Cooper Lane turn right onto **Holt Lane**, then at the T-junction where the house 'Wellfield' stands, take the right turn continuing down Holt Lane. There are some beautiful houses and views on this lane, only spoilt by the ugly but

apparently necessary mobile phone masts. From this point you can just see the top of Emley Mast peeping out above the hill and also Castle Hill in the distance.

At this point the lane peters out into a track which becomes **Mark Bottoms Lane**. Follow this lane which eventually descends to meet **Mark Bottoms Dike**. At the fork in the lane take the right fork down to meet the dike and cross it via the stepping-stones. Turn sharp right immediately after crossing, heading up the hill through the trees. (It can be quite muddy and wet and feels as though you are walking through a stream). Continue along the waterlogged path in a cutting between fields.

After numerous bends in the path, the path will eventually widen and you will see modern houses on the right. Ignore the stile in the wall to the right and continue to the T-junction in the track where you should turn right and walk along the track which eventually becomes **Broomy Lea Lane**. (NB. There is a bench here which affords fantastic views and offers walkers a place to sit and picnic, dry out after the waterlogged path or just relax!)

Continue straight along Broomy Lea Lane keeping the houses on the right. You are now in **Netherthong** – a typical Kirklees village with its church, pub, school, shop and numerous examples of weavers' cottages. Turn right into Towngate and continue past **All Saints Church** (below) and the village's only shop – **Londis**. There is also a war memorial on Towngate to remember villagers who fought in the two world wars. After the memorial take the right down Church Street passing the aptly named **Clothier's Arms** and **Netherthong Primary School**. At this point the view opens up again and there is also a view of some exceptional weavers' cottages down to the left.



Continue walking down the road which has now become Thong Lane, a long steep descent, eventually coming out at the **A6024 Woodhead Road**. Cross the road and continue along Miry Lane. You will see the sign for the recently refurbished **Thongsbridge Tennis Club** (in 2005 Thongsbridge Tennis Club hosted a visit from one of the biggest stars in world tennis – Martina Hingis, as well as Ilie Nastase and Peter Fleming), Thongsbridge Bowling Club and **Thongsbridge Cricket Club** (the first of our two cricket grounds) on the left. The home of the cricket club with its whitewashed boundary walls can be seen from the road. This immediate area was once home to

several mills undoubtedly because of its riverside location. Today it is home to a variety of businesses.



Thongsbridge cricket ground in 1966

Cross the bridge over the **River Holme** and just after **St. Andrew's Church** take the right down **Berry Bank Lane** – the old turnpike route. It is also worth noting that the Holmfirth Branch railway line used to run just below and to the right of where you are walking. At the fork keep to the right staying on the main path heading for Holmfirth. At another fork further along, ignore the track up to the left. Eventually you will come to some newly built houses. Continue straight on eventually emerging on to **New Mill Road** which soon becomes Station Road. Turn right at the road and walk along **Station Road** towards Holmfirth.

Walk past **Engine House** and just after the **Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses** take the public footpath to the right down some steps. Turn right at the bottom of the steps and follow the road round over the river until you reach Huddersfield Road. If you want to visit **Holmfirth cricket ground** (below) it is a couple of steps away back towards Thongsbridge. Alternatively you can head back to the centre of Holmfirth by turning left at Huddersfield Road.

