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A Taste of the Last of the Summer Wine

Follow in the footsteps of the immortal Compo, Foggy and Clegg on their South Pennine adventures.

Distance 4.5 miles (7.2km)

Minimum time 3hrs

Ascent/gradient 558ft (170m)

Level of difficulty Medium

Paths Good paths and tracks, 8 stiles

Landscape Upland pasture

Suggested map aqua3 OS Explorer 288 Bradford & Huddersfield

Start/finish SE 143084

Dog friendliness Can be off lead except in central Holmfirth

Parking Centre of Holmfirth gets very crowded, so park in Crown Bottom car park (pay-and-display) on Huddersfield Road

Public toilets Holmfirth

Holmfirth and the Holme Valley have been popularised as 'Summer Wine Country'. Last of the Summer Wine was first seen in January 1973, as a one-off Comedy Playhouse episode. The response was so good that a six-part series was commissioned. The rest is history, with the whimsical Summer Wine becoming the UK's longest running comedy programme. Its larger-than-life characters, going back to their second childhoods, have proved to be an irresistible formula in the hands of writer Roy Clarke.

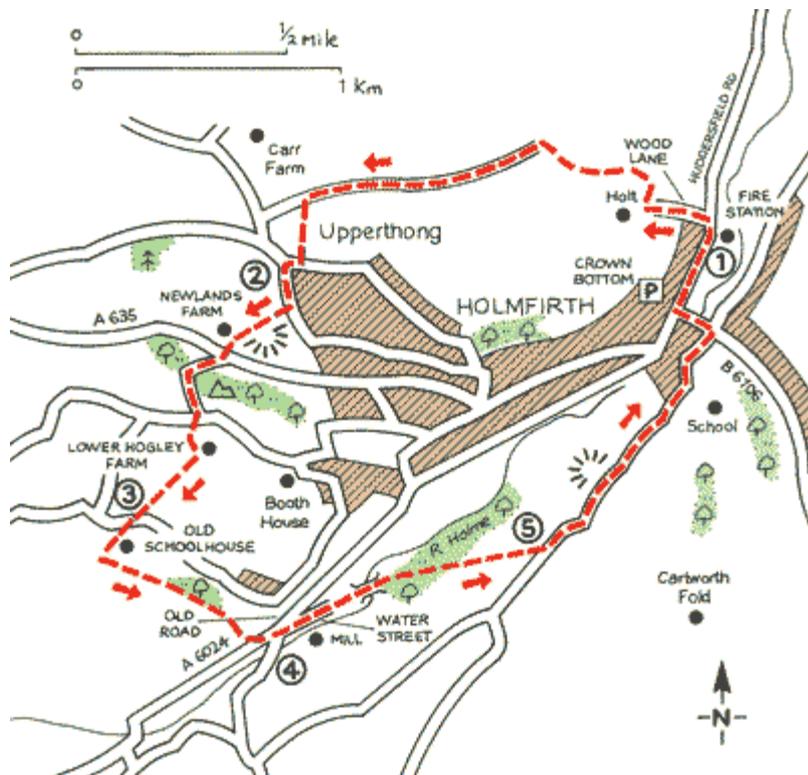
The cast have become familiar faces around Holmfirth. So much so that when Londoner Bill Owen (lovable rogue 'Compo') died in 1999 at the age of 85, he was laid to rest overlooking the little town he had grown to call home. As a sign that this affection is reciprocated, there are plans afoot to erect a statue of Compo in the town. With Bill Owen's son Tom having joined the cast, who knows; perhaps the series has plenty of life in it yet.

Visitors come to Holmfirth in droves, in search of film locations such as Sid's Café and Nora Batty's house. But Holmfirth takes TV fame in its stride, for this isn't the first time that the town has starred in front of the cameras. In fact,

Holmfirth very nearly became another Hollywood. Bamforths - better known for its naughty seaside postcards - began to make short films here in the early years of the last century. They were exported around the world. Local people were drafted in as extras in Bamforth's overwrought dramas. Film production came to an end at the outbreak of the First World War and, sadly, was never resumed.

Holmfirth town, much more than just a film set, is the real star - along with the stunning South Pennine scenery which surrounds it. By the time you have completed half of this walk, you are but a mile (1.6km) from the Peak National Park.

The town grew rapidly with the textile trades, creating a tight-knit community in the valley bottom: a maze of ginnels, alleyways and narrow lanes. The River Holme, which runs through its middle, has flooded on many occasions. But the most devastating flood occurred back in 1852 when, after heavy rain, Bilberry Reservoir burst its banks. The resulting torrent of water destroyed the centre of Holmfirth and claimed 81 lives. The tragedy was reported at length on the front page of the London Illustrated News, complete with an artist's impression of the devastation. A public subscription fund was started to help the flood survivors to rebuild the town. These traumatic events are marked by a monument near the bus station.



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1 From Crown Bottom car park, walk to the right along Huddersfield Road for just 100yds (91m) before bearing left opposite the fire station, up Wood Lane. The road soon narrows to a steep track. Keep left of a house and through a gate, to continue on a walled path. At the top of the hill, by a bench, follow the track to the right. Follow this track, soon enclosed, as it wheels left, down into a valley. Soon after you approach woodland, you have a choice of tracks: keep left on the walled path, uphill. Join a more substantial farm track and, 100yds (91m) before the cottage ahead, look for a wall stile on the left. Follow a field path to emerge, between houses, in Upperthong. Turn right into the village, past a pub to a T-junction.

2 Bear left along the road, which wheels round to the right. Walk downhill, with great views opening up of the Holme Valley. After 150yds (138m) on the road, take a cinder track on the right. Walk down past Newlands Farm to meet a road. Cross over and take the lane ahead, steeply down into a little valley and up the other side. When this minor road forks at the top, go right, uphill. Immediately after the first house, go left, on a sandy track. Follow this track to Lower Hogley Farm where you keep right, past a knot of houses, to a gate and on to a field path, with a wall to your left. Over a stile, cross the next field, now with the wall to your right. Past the next wall stile, veer half left across the next field (aim for the mast on the horizon). After one more field, descend to a road.

3 Go right for just 50yds (46m) to bear left around an old schoolhouse on a grassy path. Follow the walled path downhill, through a gate; as the path opens out into a grassy area, bear left on a grassy track down into the valley. Follow a high wall on your right, over a stile, on to an enclosed path. On approaching houses, take a stile and join a metalled track at a fork. Bear right here, then immediately left, on a narrow path between houses. Follow a field path through a gate; pass houses and a mill down to meet the main A6024 road.

4 Cross the road; by a row of diminutive cottages take Old Road to the left. Keep straight ahead at a junction down Water Street. Beyond a mill, cross the River Holme on a metal footbridge and follow a riverside path. Soon the path veers right through pasture; when the path forks, keep right, uphill, to enter woodland. Continue in the same direction, uphill, emerging from the wood on to a field path. After two stiles join a track by a house. Pass more cottages to meet a road.

5 Go left, along the road. You should enjoy splendid views down into the Holme Valley, as you make the long descent back to Holmfirth.