

TOP RMHT Stage 05: Leigh to Blackrod

↔ 13.4 mi

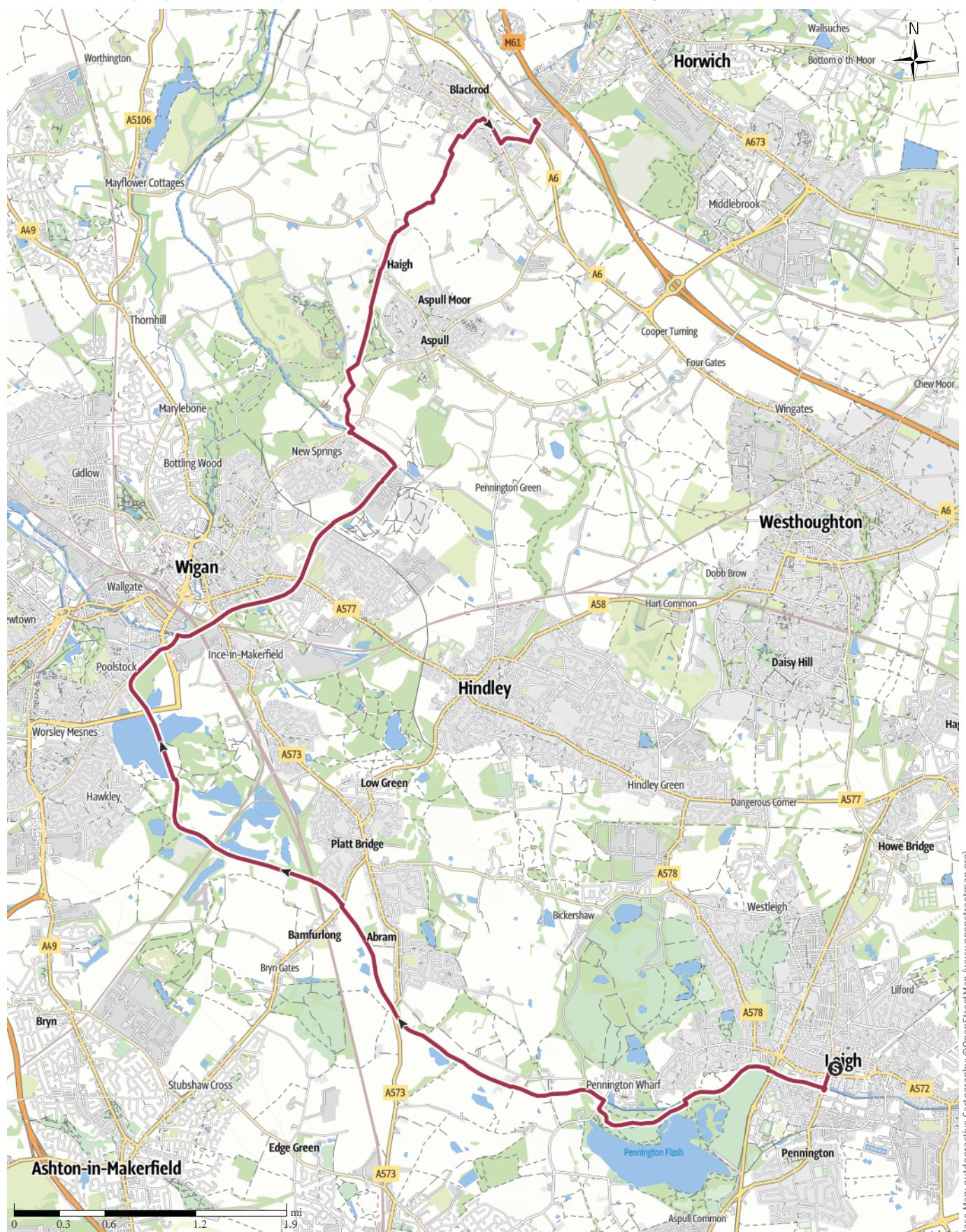
5:25 h

▲↑ 492ft

236ft

Difficulty

moderate



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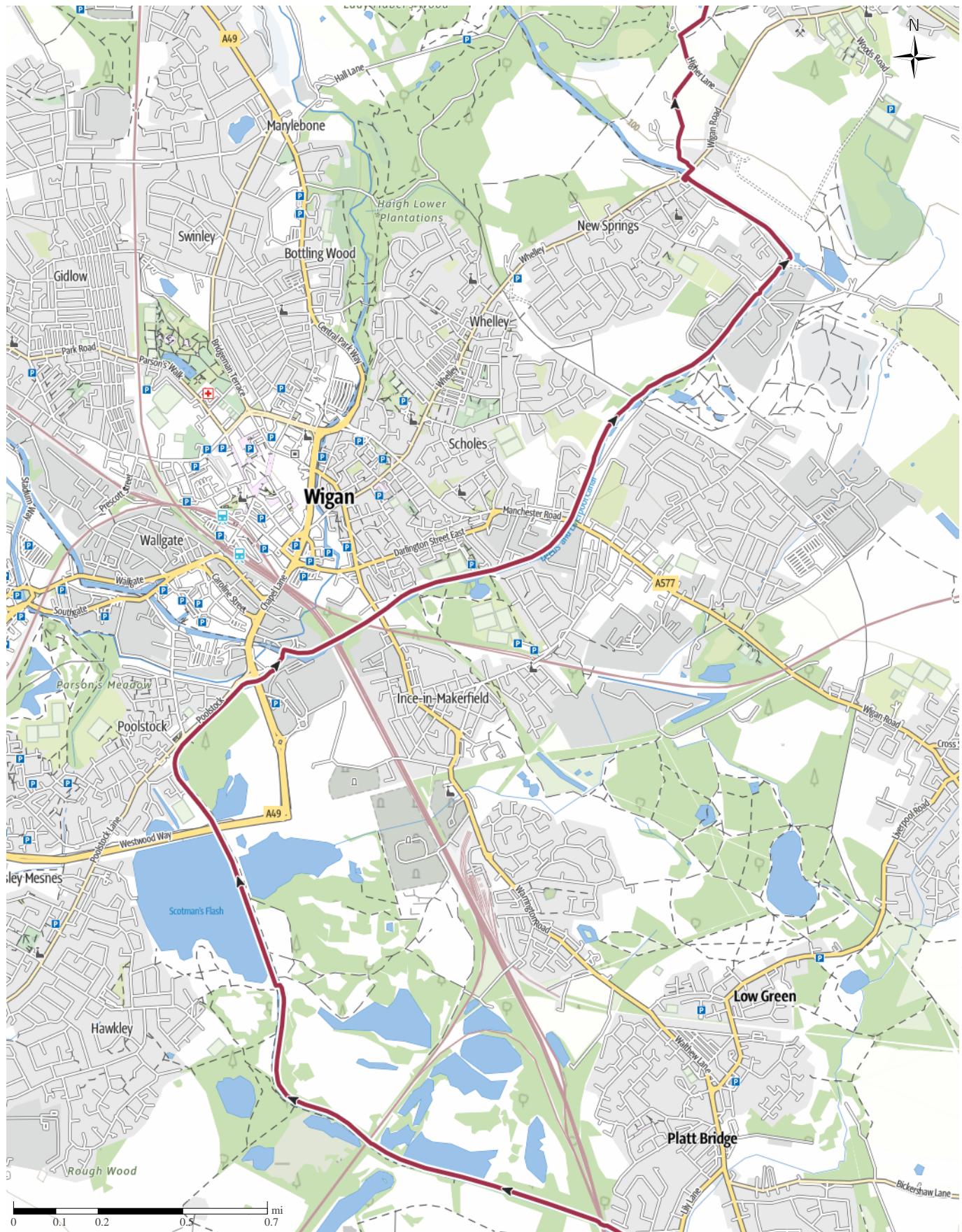
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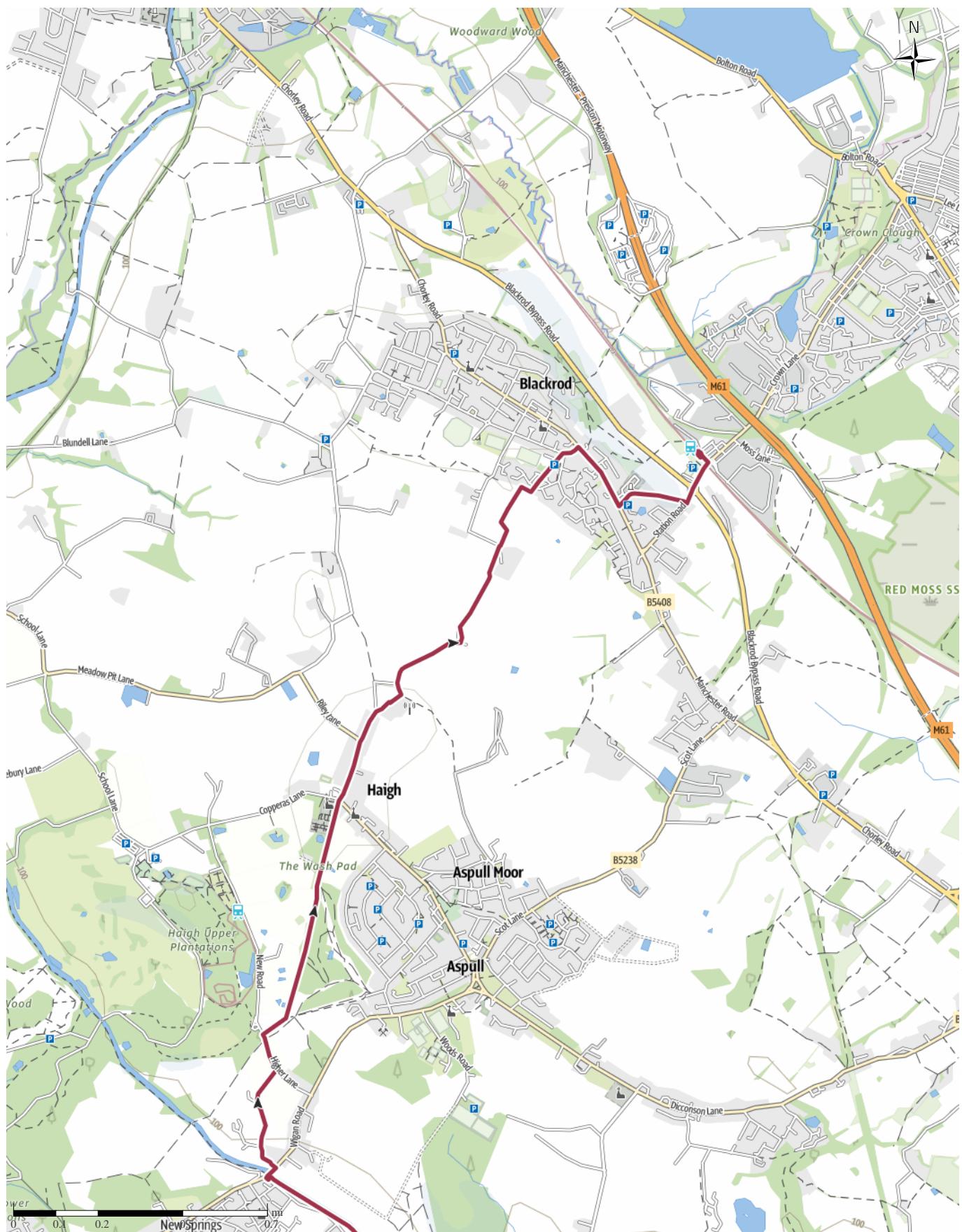
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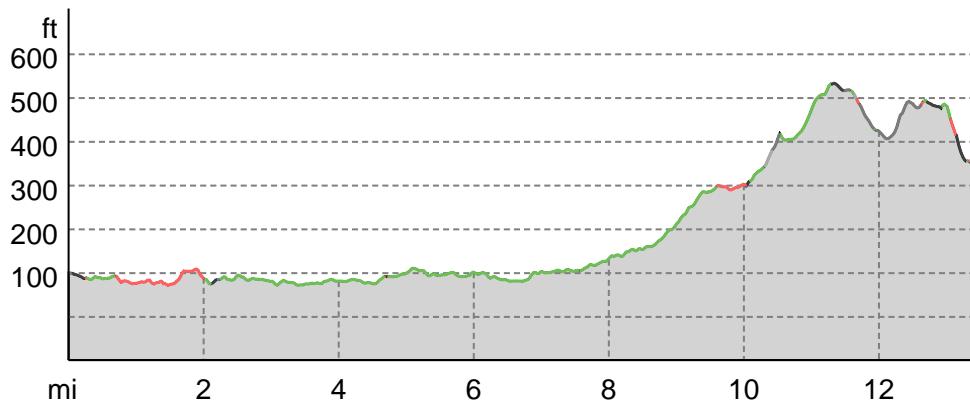
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Road surface

Asphalt	1.2 mi
Dirt road	0.1 mi
Way	9.1 mi
Path	2 mi
Street	0.8 mi
Unknown	0.2 mi

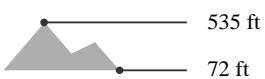
Elevation profile

route data
Hiking route

Distance	13.4 mi
Duration	5:25 h
Ascent	492 ft
Descent	236 ft

Difficulty moderate

Stamina

Technique

Altitude

Best time of year

JAN | FEB | MAR
APR | MAY | JUN
JUL | AUG | SEP
OCT | NOV | DEC

Ratings
Authors

Experience



Landscape


Community
More route data

Properties

Public-transport-friendly Linear route

Multi-stage route


Matthew Ball

Update: September 16, 2021

Stage 5 of the Round Manchester Hiking Trail: Leigh to Blackrod via the Wigan Flashes

Starting from Leigh Bus Station, we head out on the Leigh Branch of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal towards Wigan, detouring to the south for a bit to get some good views out over Pennington Flash. This canal walk gives us extensive views of the countryside across Lancashire, until we get to the Flashes, when the landscape takes a watery turn, and birdwatchers will have plenty to see. After passing through Wigan, we

walk up through 21 locks before leaving the Canal shortly after the aptly named Top Lock. Then we follow footpaths and minor roads to the village of Haigh, where the view opens out spectacularly to Winter Hill, which is on the route of the next stage of this long distance walk around Manchester. We then follow footpaths through Freezeland Farm to get us back to the small town of Blackrod.

Author's recommendation

This route was walked by Manchester Weekend Walkers (a branch of the Ramblers) on Saturday 22nd February 2020.

As well as being a walking route in its own right, it is also Stage 5 of the Round Manchester Hiking Trail, a 13-stage long distance walk that completely encircles the city of Manchester. The Trail is designed to be accessible by public transport, and to take in a varied selection of the best scenery in the

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Manchester area. It is 157 miles long in total and has about 6,000m of ascent.

The Trail starts in Macclesfield, and then proceeds in a clockwise direction via the other twelve staging points (Wilmslow, Knutsford, Lymm, Leigh, Blackrod, Entwistle, Rawtenstall, Todmorden, Marsden, Hadfield, Edale, and Buxton) before the last stage takes it back to Macclesfield again to complete the loop.

Since 2019, Manchester Weekend Walkers (a branch of the Ramblers) have been walking each of the stages in order roughly once every four weeks (pandemic permitting), which results in the full loop being completed once every year. The first five stages cover mostly lowland territory, and so are walked in the winter months, leaving the sunnier parts of the year in which to tackle the hills that otherwise nearly surround Manchester on three sides.

As of the summer of 2021, it is intended that the Trail will at some point be registered with the Long Distance Walkers Association as an "official" long distance path, although this hasn't yet happened at the time of writing. However, all 13 stages are available on the Outdoor Active website and can be downloaded as GPX files.

Safety information

There are no significant hazards on this route.

Equipment

Good walking boots and otherwise sensible hiking gear.

Additional information

Tips and hints

Assembly Points:

The Platform on the Bus Station where the V1 stops is probably the best, as people can nip to the shops briefly from there, and also the toilets.

Stiles:

5 on the route, mostly in good condition.

Toilets:

Toilets at the Bus Station in Leigh, adjacent to the V1 platform, charge 20p but are in good nick. Next stop is whichever pub stop you choose in Wigan, or else the public toilets near the railway stations in Wigan town centre (although these are slightly off the route). There are no clear opportunities along the canal as there is no shelter. There won't be anything in Blackrod apart from whichever pub you stop in.

Obstructions:

None known as of Feb 2021.

Timings:

1:00 - Plank Lane Swing Bridge (where we rejoin the canal after Pennington Flash)

2:00 - The A58, where we cross the Canal at the Dover Bridge Inn

3:00 - Poolstock, where we turn right on the canal to head start heading north-east

4:00 - The Kirkless Hall Inn

5:00 - Haigh Village

6:00 - Blackrod

Bail-Out Points:

The major bail-out point is at Wigan, where we pass close by to both of the main railway stations in the town centre. After this you could try catching a bus along the A577, or else from Aspull, but neither of these would be a smooth option.

Lunch Stop:

The ideal lunch stop is by the side of the lake at Scotsman's Flash - after crossing the bridge over the canal follow the path inland ¼ mile before turning right and finding your way to the waterside.

Alternatively, you could sit down on the green verges by the side of the canal. Or else, arrange lunch at one of the possible pub stops in Wigan.

Pub Stops En Route:

Possible options for lunch stops, both only slightly off route, are The Honeysuckle (large enough when I last visited in Dec 2019) and The Silverwell (which I haven't tried).

Later on, there is The Kirkless Hall Inn, directly on route

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and suitable for groups - but it may not be open any more (I last visited in Feb 2020). On the B5238, on which we leave the canal, there is the Crown Hotel and the Collier's Arms, both slightly off route. Finally, there are the two pubs in Haigh Village, the Balcarres Arms and the Victoria.

Post-Walk Refreshments:

Right by the railway station, The Rivington Arms is a gastro-pub with no outdoor space, so difficult for a group (although a small group would probably be OK).

The other alternative is the Heroes Bar, at which I remember having a really good time in Feb 2020. It is great if you are up for something different - only downside is that, although it is directly on the route, it is still 1/2 mile from Blackrod Railway Station.

Turn-by-turn directions

Starting point / trailhead

Leigh Bus Station

Coordinates:

DD: 53.495717, -2.518473

DMS: 53°29'44.6"N 2°31'06.5"W

UTM: 30U 531944 5927525

w3w: //converter.remain.weddings

Point of arrival

Blackrod Railway Station

Turn-by-turn directions

From Leigh Bus Station, head south along the main road and continue in that direction through the town's main crossroads until you cross over a canal. This is the Wigan Branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, which we now join by taking the sliproad path leftward from the road down to the canal level. We now head westwards along the canal, heading under another major roadbridge on the edge of Leigh. Immediately after this there is a footbridge over the canal, and about 3/4 of a mile after this, there is another. At this second footbridge, we turn left to take a short break from the Canal to take a closer look at Pennington Flash, the huge lake just to our south. Turn right as soon as you have gone down a slope to follow a well defined track. Keep following this track, and it will take you across the highest ground in the area (although that is only 35m above sea level). After a while, you will meet a road head on at a right-angle - turn right to head north-east for a short while until you reach the drawbridge over the canal at Pennington Wharf.

Having got back to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at

Pennington Wharf, we now follow it on the southern side for 2.5 miles (including passing under the A573 after just under 2 miles) until we reach a bridge at which there is a pub called the Dover Lock Inn. This is also where the A58 main road crosses the canal, and where we cross it too, in order to carry on following the canal, but this time on its north-eastern side, towards Wigan. We now follow this towpath for another 1.75 miles, under two railway lines: the West Coast Main Line between London and Scotland; and then the local line between Wigan and Liverpool. Then we come to an elegant wrought iron bridge that crosses back to the south-western side of the canal, and we take this to reach Scotsman's Flash.

Scotsman's Flash also provides a good place for a lunch stop, although it is slightly off-route. After the bridge over the canal, head straight on into some woods for a couple of hundred yards, and then turn right after a drainage ditch to head down to the lakeside - there you can sit amongst the trees and get some shelter.

Once we are back on the western side of the canal, we proceed along this for another 1.25 miles until we get to a canal junction in the middle of Wigan. At this point we carry on straight across the bridge over the Liverpool branch of the canal and then turn right, just by the huge Nice-Pak factory across the canalside. We then pass under another couple of railway lines: the West Coast Main Line again; and then the line to Salford via Atherton. Then there are series of locks taking the canal progressively uphill for about 2 miles, this time in a north-east direction, until we reach the aptly named Top Lock, at which point the canal turns left. We follow it on the southern side until we reach the next major bridge - Wigan Road (the B5238) - after about 1/3 of a mile. This is the point where we finally leave the Leeds and Liverpool Canal behind and enter the final phase of this walk, where we head back in to the open country again and pass through fields and villages on the way to Blackrod.

When we leave the canal we take an exit path to the left, which then loops right on to Wigan Road as it bridges over the canal. On reaching the brow of the bridge, cross the road and proceed north-east for a very short distance, 50 yards or so, until a footpath sign appears pointing leftwards, at which point we follow this path. As we follow the footpath, we now need to be on the lookout for a slightly hidden turn to the right that goes off at a narrow angle to the main path. We need to take this right turn, which then leads us across some scrubby ground with some construction work going on, before reaching the tarmacked Higher Lane. On the way we do pass a sign saying "beware of the dog", but I have never encountered a problem with any dog here and the route does stick to a recognised right-

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of-way. At Higher Lane, we turn left and follow the road for 250 yards over a bridge, before taking the second of two possible right turns onto a well-maintained straight bridleway. After another 100 yards, we bear slightly left to continue northwards along the bridleway towards the village of Haigh, which we reach after another 3/4 mile.

On arriving in Haigh, we just keep following the main road northwards until we get to the end of the housing and the main road turns left. At this point we leave the main road to keep straight on northward, along Toddington Lane. At the first footpath junction after 100 yards, bear very slightly right to pass by Toddington Farm, which we keep to our right. At the T-junction near the radio transmitter, take the left turn, heading toward Freezeland Farm. Once we reach Freezeland, pass most of the way through the courtyard before looking leftward for the signpost that will point you to the path northward towards Blackrod.

This path reaches a junction after just 30 yards at which we bear right, staying on the right-hand side of the hedge-line. The path leads us across a drainage ditch (the boundary between the Metropolitan Boroughs of Wigan and Bolton), and then into a field with some horses in it, which we cross whilst keeping two long outbuildings to our right as we do so. The path then gets fenced off from the field and gets channelled onto a roadway which we cross to keep heading north, after which point it can get muddy. Very shortly after the path takes a left turn at the top of the field (and then passes through some difficult mud) there is a hard-to-spot stile through the hedgerow on the right which we must now take for the final ascent to Blackrod. After crossing the final field we do a right-left shimmy to put us on an urban pathway that takes to a car park, which we cross to go past a leisure centre onto Vicarage Road, which we follow very briefly until we turn right at the main road through the town, the B5408. After a couple of hundred yards on the main road we reach the Heroes Bar on the right, and shortly after that the left turn onto the cobbled footpath that takes us past the cemetery before bending right and heading downhill towards the big crossroads between the B5238 and the A6, on the other side of which is Blackrod Railway Station.

Getting There

 This route is conveniently accessible by public transport.

Public transport

To get to Leigh Bus Station from Manchester, take the V1 bus service, which runs every 20 minutes on a

Saturday morning from various places in the city centre, having started from MRI.

The GM Wayfarer one-day pass is valid on this service. For more information see <https://tfgm.com/tickets-and-passes/wayfarer-adult>

Getting there

From Blackrod Railway Station, the return train services run roughly once every half-hour and go to either Piccadilly or Victoria.

Parking

If you using your car to cover part of the journey, the most logical place to park would be Salford Crescent, as the outward V1 bus service calls there, as do the return train services.

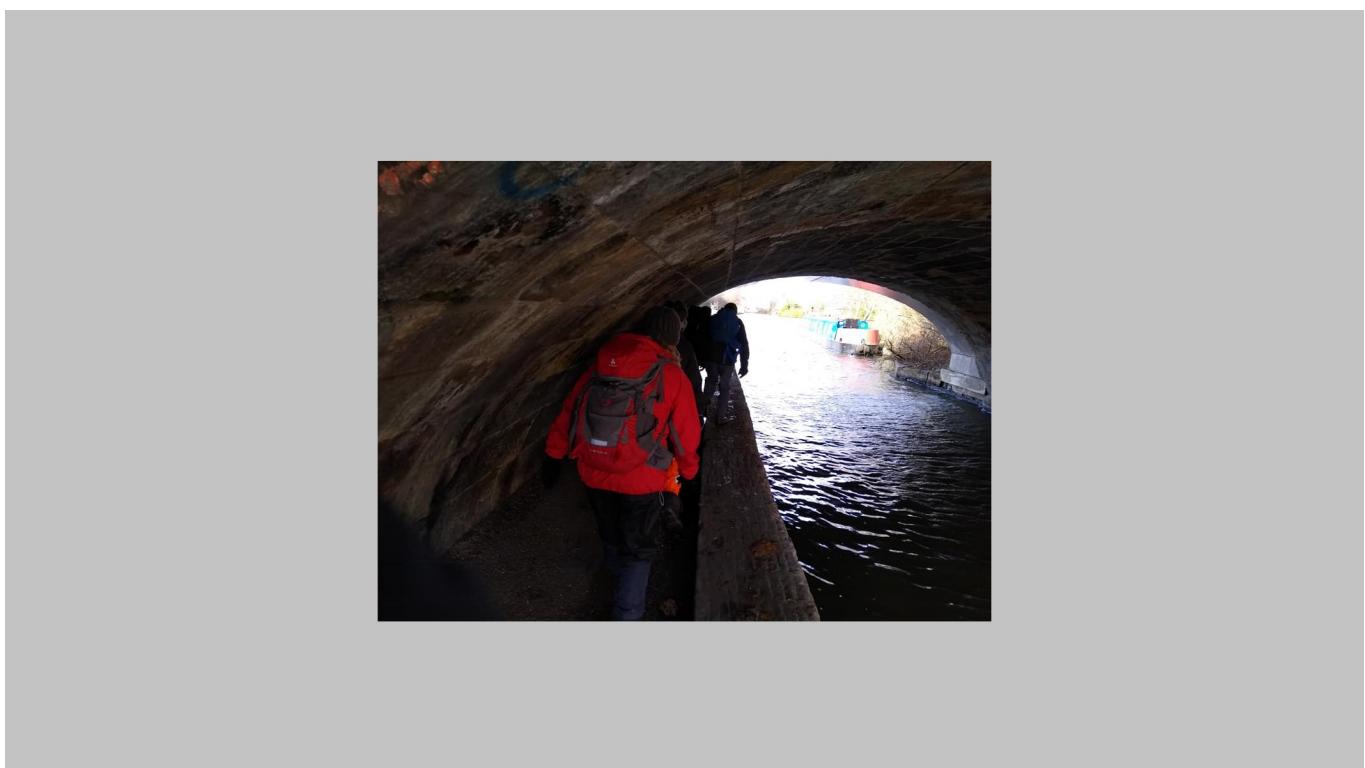
Takeaway route for iPhone and Android



Scan QR code, save this route offline, share with friends and more...

Website

<https://out.ac/IliYwe>



Bridge under the A579, Leigh

Photo: Matthew Ball, Community



Scotsman's Flash, Wigan

Photo: Matthew Ball, Community

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Legend

Topography

	Wood, forest
	Moor, swamp, marsh
	Moorland
	Residential building area with single building
	Industrial real estate with single building
	Cemetery
	Golf course
	Sportsfield, stadium
	Stadium
	Open-air pool
	Vineyard
	Petrograph
	Country border
	State border
	District border
	Contour line
	Special use area
	Nature reserve

Topographic single signs

	Summit cross
	Elevation point
	Rock
	Cave
	Church
	Chapel
	Cemetery
	Palace/Castle
	Abbey
	Monument
	Ruin
	Mine
	Cairn
	Broadcasting tower
	Windwheel
	Water-/windmill
	Viewpoint

Streets and ways

	Freeway with number
	Highway with number
	State, country, district street
	Village road
	Main agricultural road
	Agricultural road
	Trail
	Via Ferrata

Lifts, Railway

	Ropeway lift
	Gondola lift
	Chairlift
	Ski-, draglift
	Aerial ropeways
	Railway
	Suburban train
	Subway
	Tram
	Railway station