

Winter Hill Mass Trespass 1896

<http://www.justusuk.com/2009/11/will-yo-come-o-sunday-morning.html>

In the summer of 1896, Colonel Richard Henry Ainsworth erected gates across access roads, fixed "Trespassers will be prosecuted" signs and hired men to warn people off the property. The public outcry led to a small advertisement appearing in the Bolton paper, paid for by the Social Democratic Federation. It invited the public to join a demonstration on Sunday morning, 6 September 1896, to test the right of way over Winter Hill.

A crowd of 1000 met in Bolton to listen to some speeches. Numbers increased tenfold as they marched up Halliwell Road towards the edge of the moor. At the gate they were confronted by a small contingent of police. According to the Bolton Chronicle, "Amid the lusty shouting of the crowd the gate was attacked by powerful hands..... short work was made of the barrier, and with a ring of triumph the demonstrators rushed through onto the disputed territory. Plans were soon in place to repeat the procession. A song was commissioned.

*"Will yo' come o' Sunday morning',
For a walk o'er Winter Hill.
Ten thousand went last Sunday,
But there's room for thousands still!"*

*"O the moors are rare and bonny,
And the heather's sweet and fine,
And the road across this hill top,
Is the public's - Yours and mine!"*

Despite some rain the following Sunday, 2000 people came and listened to speeches. Again the crowd grew as it set off for the moor, completely blocking Halliwell Road. This spontaneous movement of 1896 did not quite achieve what it set out to do. For years the right of access to Winter Hill was embroiled in the British Legal System. However less than 40 years later, better organised and more capable men set in train the events of Kinder Scout, which proved momentous to those who enjoy the freedom to roam our hills and moors."