

Dearne Way

The Dearne Way is made up of eight short walks joined to form a continuous footpath some 30 miles (48 km) in length, mainly through the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley, but also in part in Kirklees, Wakefield and Doncaster.

This leaflet is one of a series of four, designed not only to show you the route, but also to point out and explain many of the interesting facts and features to be discovered along the way.

Further information

If you have any comments regarding the walk, or encounter any difficulties en route, please do not hesitate to contact:
Rights of Way Team,
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, PO Box 601,
Barnsley S70 9FA
Telephone 01226 773555
Email publicrightsofway@barnsley.gov.uk

Information on bus and train services is available on 01709 515151.
www.travelsouthyorkshire.com

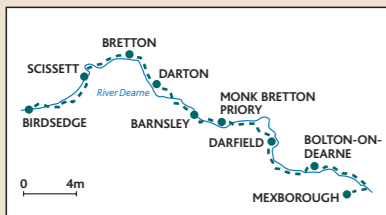
OS Explorer maps nos. 278 and 288 cover the area

The Dearne Way follows as closely as possible the valley of the River Dearne from its source near Birdsedge, Denby Dale, to its meeting with the River Don at Mexborough. You will see for yourself that the valley is rich in wildlife, thriving in a landscape shaped and changed by human toil and industry over thousands of years.

Keep an eye out for grumpy, old blokes perched by the riverside

Acknowledgements
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Illustrations by Geoff Carr, Dan Powell and Anna Sutton
Photographs by Phil Butcher, Laurie Campbell, Brian Elliott, Alan Hall and NHPA

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Waymarked Walk No. 5

Barnsley to Monk Bretton Priory

Starting point
Twibell Street, Old Mill, Barnsley

Distance
2 miles (3.2 km)

Time
Allow yourself up to 2 hours for exploring at a leisurely pace

Footwear
Some sections can have wet, muddy or uneven ground. Stout shoes are recommended

Waymarks
The route is waymarked with a miner's lamp symbol

How to get there
By Bus: Barnsley may be reached by bus services throughout the county. The start is within walking distance of the town centre, or a short bus ride from the bus station. A service also connects Monk Bretton Priory back to the start or back to Barnsley bus station

By Train: Barnsley is accessible from Huddersfield, Leeds, Wakefield and Sheffield

By Car: Areas suitable for parking are available near to the starting point off Twibell Street

Barnsley's industrial heartland

The period 1740-1860 witnessed the birth of some of the staple industries which were to carry Barnsley through to the 20th century. The canals and railways, by converging in this part of the valley, accelerated expansion in what was to become Barnsley's industrial heartland. Five collieries, three glassworks, two bleachworks and a brewery dominated the area. Little now remains of the numerous collieries, factories, canals and railways which once prospered here; so too their vital arteries, the canals and railways. Out of this ugly dereliction has grown the Dearne Valley Park, but under the veneer can still be seen remains of the industrial era.

Coal was first won in the area in the 15th century and the Barnsley seam was to become one of the richest in South Yorkshire. By 1620 wire-drawing was a thriving industry. The manufacture of linen was introduced to Barnsley in 1744 and the town's hand-loom weavers went on to produce some of the finest linen in the world. As the linen trade declined, due to cheaper Irish linen, the arrival of the railways in the 1840s allowed the rich coal seams to be exploited. Even in the early 1980s the mining industry still employed over one third of all working men in the Borough.



This attractive section of the Dearne Way goes through Dearne Valley Park, which following reclamation is now rich in wildlife

1 The route starts at the junction of Harborough Hill Road and Twibell Street. A small car park is situated along Twibell Street near the canal.



Star Paper Mill

2 On the site of the Asda supermarket stood Joseph Beckett's linen mill and Old Mill bleachworks. Spun flax yarn for the linen weavers was transported by barge from Leeds and either distributed to the weavers' homes or to the town's steam-powered linen mills. In 1875, following the collapse of the linen industry, a paper mill was established here. Wood pulp for the mill and sand, lime and potash for the nearby glassworks and other cargo would have been unloaded off barges in the canal basin, where the PC World store stands today.



Junction Lock (Alan Hall)



A sail-powered canal barge crossing the aqueduct in the early 1900s

4 Go down the steps, cross the bridge, turn right down steps to the former railway line (not up the steps ahead of you), and turn left alongside the river. The stone pillars here supporting the bridge, are all that remain of the magnificent aqueduct which spanned the valley for over 150 years until the late 1950s. The Barnsley Canal was built to carry coal from Barnby Bridge, near Silkstone, to Junction Lock, high up the valley side to your right. The aqueduct took the canal across the valley to your left, and from there it would sweep northwards to Wakefield and to the Aire and Calder Navigation. The main back-traffic was limestone for land improvements on the moorlands in the west and flax yarn for the linen mills.

5 The Dove and Dearne Canal joins the Barnsley Canal at Junction Lock and was built as an alternative route for the export of Barnsley coal to Hull, by linking up with the Aire and Calder Navigation. Apart from coal, in the early 1800s typical loads carried to Leeds, York, Manchester and Hull on these waterways were: iron from the furnaces and foundries in Barnsley, Elsecar and Sheffield; millstones from Wharcliffe, which were loaded on at Worsbrough; and oak bark bound for the leather tanneries.



Tufted duck



The railway viaduct - which spanned across the Dearne valley from Barnsley Main - being dismantled in 1969 (Brian Elliott)



The main lake at Dearne Valley Park is a popular spot with local fishermen

6 Most of this hillside, as far as Barnsley's football ground, was used as a bleachcroft. Linen was taken from Hoyle Mill Bleachworks and strewn over the open fields. Since the turn of this century only memory could recall the sight of clean white cloth laid shining in the sun.

7 Follow the path, then bear left around the bottom of the lake, and turn right, keeping the river beside you. Look for the small Dearne Way mosaic next to the path. As the old industries closed, Dearne Valley Park was created on the reclaimed land. Fishing and nature lakes, new paths and bridleways, orienteering and trim trails offer amazing habitats and recreational facilities for local residents. Beyond the larger lake lies a semi-ancient woodland of oak and birch, that has existed in this location for over 500 years. When owned by Monk Bretton Priory, Cliffe Wood ranged over 40 acres (16 hectares) and probably provided fuel for an iron forge at Burton Grange Mill (see point 10). Since the 16th century the size of the wood has reduced significantly, particularly during the First World War when sections were clear-felled.

8 On the skyline above the park is the Barnsley Main Pit Head building (the last remaining large mining structure in Barnsley). The history of coal mining has been notoriously tragic with respect to the loss of human life. Barnsley Main Colliery, which closed in 1986, was sunk on the site immediately adjacent to the old Oaks Colliery. Wednesday 12 December 1866: '... he was black as coal. ... the hair almost entirely singed off his head, his body was frightfully blistered, and his arms were almost entirely skinned. His cries were excruciating beyond conception.' Only six of the twenty who survived the underground explosion lived, 361 men and boys died. The cause: poor ventilation leading to the build-up of volatile fire-damp gases. The reason: improved ventilation was considered too expensive.



Barnsley Main with Beatson Clark's glassworks beyond (Brian Elliott)

9 Above you during the early 20th century would have been the railway viaduct spanning the blackened spoil-covered valley to Barnsley Main. Walking along this now green valley beside the River Dearne and within a 'stone's throw' of the town can be rewarding and rich in wildlife. Water vole, kingfisher, green woodpecker and various damselflies and dragonflies are evident at various times of the year.

10 On your left as you walk towards Monk Bretton Priory is an old public house known as the 'Mill of the Black Monks'. Extensive research has confirmed that this building was originally a corn mill, built by the Cluniac monks before the year 1200. Some time later iron was forged here. From its founding by the Cluniac monks in 1154, the Priory was to have a history dominated by bitter strife and legal disputes until dissolution in 1538, when Henry VIII seized the buildings and properties, only to sell them off shortly afterwards.



The old corn mill, before conversion to a public house