

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.



Waymarked Walk No. 7

Darfield to Bolton-on-Dearne

Starting point
Darfield Bridge (near the Thaal Restaurant) on the main A635 Barnsley to Doncaster road

Distance
3 1/2 miles (5.6km)

Time
Allow yourself up to 3 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: Darfield and Bolton-on-Dearne are served by regular bus routes from the major towns in South Yorkshire. There is also a service which connects Bolton-on-Dearne to Darfield

By train: A service connects Bolton-on-Dearne to Wakefield, Rotherham and Sheffield

Parking: Areas suitable for parking cars exist near to the starting point in Darfield. A bus service from Bolton-on-Dearne is available to take you back to Darfield

Wetlands from wastelands

This section of the Dearne Way links up two very old Barnsley villages, Darfield and Bolton-on-Dearne. For hundreds of years neither village changed much until the mine shafts were sunk in the late 1800s. Darfield's population, for instance, rose from 600 in 1851 to 5000 by 1911, and now stands at around 7000.

As you leave Darfield and cross the River Dearne you can see from the top of the flood bank a large area of rough grassland with pools of water. In 1839, way before any coal had been won from local seams, more than half this land was growing crops while the rest was good grazing land. Mining operations have since caused the land to drop below the water table, resulting in extensive areas of wetland – much to the delight of local birdwatchers.

In spring, at Wombwell Ings and Broomhill Flash, you might see wheatear, yellow wagtail and various wading birds. In winter, the Flash is noted for its large number of duck and whooper swans. Year round can be seen heron, snipe, redshank, lapwing and tufted duck.

Old Moor Wetland Centre was created in the late 1990s by Barnsley Council, with a visitor centre and hides overlooking an extensive wetland nature reserve, which is home to large flocks of waders and wildfowl. The site is now managed by the RSPB.



Lapwing may be seen in large flocks in winter

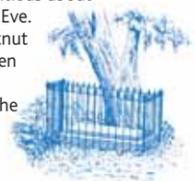
1 Still called Saltersbrook Road, salt was brought over in carts from Cheshire to the market towns of South Yorkshire via this important trans-pennine route. Following the annual slaughter of livestock each autumn, a large quantity of salt was needed to preserve the meat.



All Saints Church, Darfield

2 On the left as you walk up from the playing field towards Darfield Church, there used to be a fish pond here and the fish were farmed by Benedictine monks, who would arrive by rowing boat along the River Dearne from Monk Bretton Priory.

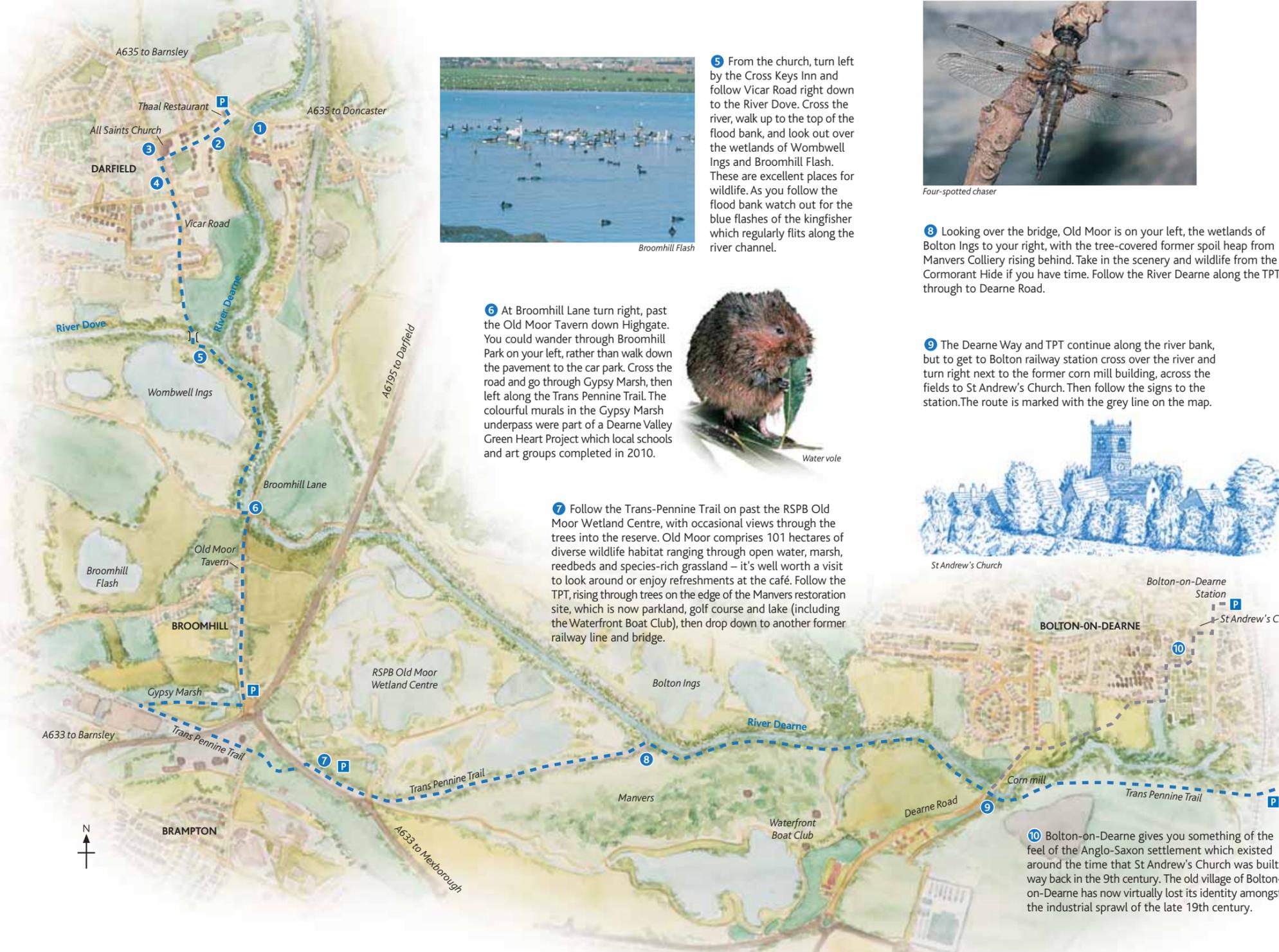
3 Take time to explore All Saints Church. Look for the names of the seven local townships on the capping stones of the walk that runs round the churchyard. 'Billingley' is easy to find – can you find the others? Each township was responsible for the upkeep of the section that bears its name. The lower parts of the main tower of the church date from the 12th century, but built into the stonework are what may remain of an earlier church on this site, dating from the 8th century.



Ebenezer's tomb

4 The graveyard is well worth a closer look. It is said that miners at Houghton Main Colliery were superstitious about going into work for the last shift on New Year's Eve. The explanation lies here beneath a horse chestnut tree, where a column marks the grave of ten men who plunged to their deaths in a cage-winding accident on New Year's Eve 1886. Nearby lies the tomb of the 'Corn Law Rhymer' Ebenezer Elliot, the poet and social reformer prominent in campaigns for the abolition of the Corn Laws.

Extensive areas of wetlands attract huge flocks of visiting bird species



Broomhill Flash

5 From the church, turn left by the Cross Keys Inn and follow Vicar Road right down to the River Dove. Cross the river, walk up to the top of the flood bank, and look out over the wetlands of Wombwell Ings and Broomhill Flash. These are excellent places for wildlife. As you follow the flood bank watch out for the blue flashes of the kingfisher which regularly flits along the river channel.



Water vole

6 At Broomhill Lane turn right, past the Old Moor Tavern down Highgate. You could wander through Broomhill Park on your left, rather than walk down the pavement to the car park. Cross the road and go through Gypsy Marsh, then left along the Trans Pennine Trail. The colourful murals in the Gypsy Marsh underpass were part of a Dearne Valley Green Heart Project which local schools and art groups completed in 2010.

7 Follow the Trans-Pennine Trail on past the RSPB Old Moor Wetland Centre, with occasional views through the trees into the reserve. Old Moor comprises 101 hectares of diverse wildlife habitat ranging through open water, marsh, reedbeds and species-rich grassland – it's well worth a visit to look around or enjoy refreshments at the café. Follow the TPT, rising through trees on the edge of the Manvers restoration site, which is now parkland, golf course and lake (including the Waterfront Boat Club), then drop down to another former railway line and bridge.



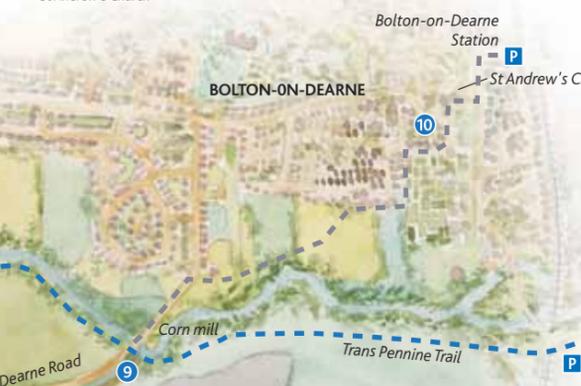
Four-spotted chaser

8 Looking over the bridge, Old Moor is on your left, the wetlands of Bolton Ings to your right, with the tree-covered former spoil heap from Manvers Colliery rising behind. Take in the scenery and wildlife from the Cormorant Hide if you have time. Follow the River Dearne along the TPT through to Dearne Road.

9 The Dearne Way and TPT continue along the river bank, but to get to Bolton railway station cross over the river and turn right next to the former corn mill building, across the fields to St Andrew's Church. Then follow the signs to the station. The route is marked with the grey line on the map.



St Andrew's Church



10 Bolton-on-Dearne gives you something of the feel of the Anglo-Saxon settlement which existed around the time that St Andrew's Church was built, way back in the 9th century. The old village of Bolton-on-Dearne has now virtually lost its identity amongst the industrial sprawl of the late 19th century.

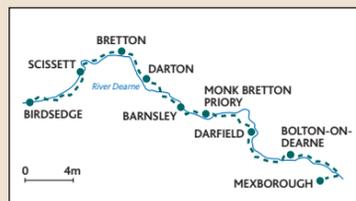
Further information
If you have any comments regarding the walk, or encounter any difficulties en route, please do not hesitate to contact:
Rights of Way Team,
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, PO Box 601,
Barnsley S70 9FA
Telephone 01226 773555
Email publicrightsofway@barnsley.gov.uk

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

OS Explorer maps nos. 278 and 288 cover the area

From Broomhill the line of the Dearne Way is also the Trans Pennine Trail. The TPT is a long distance route stretching from Southport on the Irish Sea to Hornsea on the North Sea, with links to York, Chesterfield and Leeds. Most of the TPT is suitable for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and mobility impaired users. It continues as a footpath only towards Istanbul as part of E8 European Walking Route.
www.transpenninetrail.org.uk

Old Moor Wetland Centre has a variety of wetland habitats which attract a diverse range of wildlife species



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.



Acknowledgements
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