

Enter the woods. Follow the main path down the hill, through the woods. Bear right at the waymarker, then right again. Cross over Spring Beck, then out of the woods through the gate. Follow the path round to Denby Hall Farm.

A map dated 1611 shows that a Denby Hall has stood on this site from then until the present day. The Hall was owned by the Burdett family who owned properties in High Hoyland, Denby, Ingbirchworth, Clayton West, Penistone, Kexborough, Mapplewell, Darton, Keresforth, Staincross and Barnsley itself – thus the positioning of the Hall would have provided good access to many of their estates.

At the main track (Denby Hall Lane) turn right, then left away from the buildings. Follow the path across the fields with Baycroft Wood on your left. Cross the stile and turn left down Pool Hill Lane. Take the right turn at Exley Gate, then follow the main road round to the left, down the hill on Common Lane. Take the first right to double back on yourself on Stubbin Lane. At the fork bear left down the hill towards the River Dearne. At the bottom turn right to follow the river course downstream to the stone bridge, a former pack-horse bridge since raised. The cottages ahead are at Lower Putting Mill, properly called Lower Pudding Mill, the site of a former fulling-mill and corn-mill.



The source of the River Dearne is near Birdsedge to the south-west of Denby Dale. The river flows down the valley passing through Denby Dale village and on through Bretton, eventually reaching Mexborough, where it meets with the River Don. The river not only provides a valuable wildlife habitat throughout the valley, but has also shaped the settlement patterns and provided necessary raw power to the numerous mills dotted along its

Lower Putting Mill: the former fulling mill and dam

course. The Dearne Way trail leaflets, following a long-distance footpath along the river course, are available from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

Cross the bridge and climb the hill to Wakefield Road (the old Turnpike Road again). Cross the road and bear right. Very shortly take the bridlepath to the left. Follow the track up the hill to Hen Perch Farm and cross the wooden stile into a field.

Quarrying is a long-established industry in the Skelmanthorpe area. The present quarry provides clay for the manufacture of pipes by Hepworth Building Products. Not only is the soft clay used in pipe production, but much of the associated stone can be crushed to produce pipe products as well.

Turn left and follow the small valley side. At the T-junction turn right down the hill. Follow the flagged path (an old drovers' track) along Thorpes Lane up the hill to Cross Lane recreation ground. Cross the car-park area to Smithy Lane. At the bottom of Smithy Lane cross over Commercial Road and bear right, back to the starting-point.

The Oxley Trail was originally created by young people from a Duke of Edinburgh's Award group based at Skelmanthorpe Youth Club.

The leaflet has been updated by Denby Dale Walkers are Welcome group, with finance from the East Peak Innovation Partnership (EPIP) via the Rural Development Programme for England, jointly funded by DEFRA and the EU and managed by Yorkshire Forward and with a grant from Denby Dale Parish Council.

Historic photos from the Leslie Robinson collection.



The former pack-horse bridge near Lower Putting Mill.

The Oxley Trail

Skelmanthorpe is served by buses from Huddersfield (Services 80/81/82; three per hour Monday to Saturday, hourly on Sundays; Huddersfield Bus Company) and from Wakefield/Holmfirth (Service 435; every two hours; Huddersfield Bus Company).

N.B. Bus details were correct as of May 2010. Please check at www.wymetro.com from where timetables are available.

There is a small car-park at the bottom of New Street next to the Council Offices.

Car parking is also available at the Savoy Community Centre, as are all day toilet facilities and a community café, mornings only (Monday to Friday, some Saturdays).

The village centre offers a range of shops, food outlets and pubs.

Look out for the Skelmanthorpe Village Trail waymarkers to help guide you around the trail.



see: <http://www.denbydale-walkersarewelcome.org.uk>

Walking in the East Peak



Walking in and around Denby Dale

The Oxley Trail



Carved there in a stone
A heart around a date, two names
William and Mary
Together, forever remain.

A fun day out exploring the beautiful countryside in and around the Skelmanthorpe and Deffer Wood area. The full trail is 6.8 miles. Stout footwear is advisable.

The Oxley Trail

Skelmanthorpe Cruck Barn

At the top of Lodge Street is a listed building that started life as a cruck barn serving the Skelmanthorpe village. It originated in the 17th century, with later additions during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The cruck in the name refers to the bowed supports (constructed mainly from naturally curved oak trees) that reach from the floor to the roof and support the weight of the building. There are no saw marks on any of the timbers in the construction and no nails were used to secure the joints. Instead square pegs were driven into round bore holes in the timber to fix the joints together. It is likely that the building would originally have had a thatched roof.

To the rear of the building is a mistal door with a deep stone lintel, on which is carved a love heart bearing the names William and Mary Oxley and the year 1700.

This building once housed Skelmanthorpe Youth Club and a group of young people decided they would like to find out more about the Oxley family and about the history of their area.

A Young Roots grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund enabled them to do this and resulted in the creation of the Oxley Trail.

The Oxley family

The Oxley family appear to have been a family of some standing in the area, with a Robert Oxley recorded in the Wakefield Court rolls as steward to the Lord of the Manor in the 17th century.

A marriage between a William Oxley and a Mary Wainwright is recorded in local parish registers of 1688. Further research led to the discovery of the birth of William Oxley in about 1661 and his death in 1724. Mary Wainwright appears to have been born in 1663 and her burial took place in August 1728. Rumour has it that she died in a fire and that her ghost haunts the cruck barn.

Starting-point: the junction of Lodge Street and Commercial Road, Skelmanthorpe

Walk along Commercial Road, away from the village centre, and turn left down Queen Street.

Note the Manor House on your left, built in 1692 for the stewards of the absentee manorial lord. The Oxley family

occupied this influential position and hence lived in the house next to the cruck barn, with the carving as testimony to their presence.

At the bottom of Queen Street turn right along Elm Street and straight ahead past the chapel. The road soon turns into a track. This is Pilling Lane. Continue down Pilling Lane (notice Blacker Wood and the Kirklees Light Railway line on your left - see www.kirkleeslightrailway.com) until you reach a public footpath sign on the right. Follow this footpath through open farmland, which would have been Scissett Wood in the time of the Oxleys.

Scissett Wood used to cover much of what is present-day Scissett. The wood was gradually felled over the years until in the 1870s the remaining forty acres were cut down to provide additional pasture land for Lower Busker Farm.

The importance of Scissett Wood lay in its timber value (the woods were rotationally coppiced to provide a sustainable supply of timber) rather than being a hunting-ground where the hunters' quarry would be the source of the wood's value.

Go straight across the access lane to Scissett Middle School and, on approaching Lower Busker Farm, bear right through the gate and up the short drive. Turn left down Busker Lane to the main A636 road – the old Turnpike Road.

The Turnpike Road (the main road through Denby Dale) was first proposed in 1830 to run from Wakefield to Denby Dale. The road was completed in 1842 and still follows its original route.

Turn left, cross over the main road via the pelican crossing, and continue to the first right turn – Barnsley Road. Follow this round the bend to Lower Common Lane on your right. Follow Lower Common Lane up the hill, with views over Scissett up to Emley and Emley Moor transmitter on your right.

At the road junction continue straight ahead onto a dirt track. Follow the track down and just before the pond bear left around Bagden Hall golf course on Bagden Lane.

The first buildings on the Bagden Hall site were built in the 17th century and were known as Bagden Hall Farm. The Bagden Hall we see today was built by George and Joseph Norton – local mill-owners who used the water supply of the River Dearne to power their mills and who were also responsible for constructing purpose-built housing for their

weavers and employees. The two brothers built themselves identical houses – one being Bagden Hall (George) and the other Nortonthorpe Hall (Joseph). Bagden Hall is now used as a hotel with accompanying golf course, but was originally built as a single dwelling in 1840.

Bear left at the next junction and follow the lane round to Hay Royds colliery.

Hay Royds pit was established in 1908 and is the sole remaining independent pit in the area. Tucked away as it is, it could easily be overlooked by visitors and residents alike, even though it is very much an operational pit.

The colliery was operated by the Flack family as a private concern, which meant working under licence, not employing more than 50, and extracting not more than 100,000 tons of coal per year.

The mine operates on a drift system, which means it has no winding gear on the surface so much associated with coal mines. The drift entrance goes out under Wheatley Hill Farm to the working coal-face.

Continue until a metalled road is encountered. To your left you can glimpse Wheatley Hill Farm. Turn right along the road (Wheatley Hill Lane) but keep an eye out for the footpath on the right.

There are three derivations of the name Wheatley, namely whetelai, weteley and hwaete Leah, all referring to an open space or clearing, probably dating back to mediaeval times.

The farm house is a timber frame structure – another cruck building similar to the building at the start of the walk.

Take the footpath on the right and follow it through two



fields and over a stile. When you reach the road turn left and you will see Deffer Woods in front of you.

Not much is known about the early history of Deffer Woods but it became part of the Cannon Hall estate of the Spencer Stanhope family in 1894. A direct descendant of this family now manages the woods as an economic forestry operation and for wildlife conservation, improving the bio-diversity of the woodlands for the benefit of nature and humans alike.

The main tree species you will see is the Corsican Pine with dark grey bark and long green needles, though alongside the path broad-leaved species such as oak can be found.