

# **Dobcross Trail**

**Start:** Brownhill Countryside Centre, Wool Road, Uppermill

**Distance:** 4km/2.5 miles

**Ascent:** 150 metres/492 feet

**Time:** 2 hours

## **Introduction**

This easy walk follows quiet country lanes, bridleways and the delightful Delph Donkey Trail as it explores Saddleworth's rich historic past in and around the picturesque village of Dobcross.

Sitting at an ancient crossing point of the River Tame, Dobcross was the centre of the domestic flannel and woollen cloth production industry. Throughout the village and surrounding areas you will see fine examples of many of the original 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century weavers' cottages and the mills that were built to meet the demands of production.

## **Walk Description**

Brownhill Countryside Centre was built in 1916 as stables and used as a transport depot by Saddleworth Urban District Council. In 1982, it became a visitor centre, complete with picnic area and an award-winning nature garden. It now includes a popular café, known as the Lime Kiln.

From the visitor centre, the route crosses Brownhill Bridge, over which the Oldham & Ripponden Trust turnpike road once crossed. On the right is the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Brownhill Bridge Mill, which was originally used as a teasing mill. In front of the mill, and hidden in the undergrowth, is a medieval packhorse bridge which spans Diggle Brook and was part of an ancient trans-Pennine trading route between Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Beyond the bridge, the route now follows a medieval route known as Nicker Brow to reach the picturesque village of Dobcross. At the top of this old routeway is Bridge House. Built in the 1790s, it was a master clothier's house and is a surviving example of the village's former thriving woollen industry. The

'takin' in steps' can clearly be seen, up which wool would have been taken for storage. Henry Platt was born here in 1793 and he built Carding Engines in the outbuildings. He went on to form Platt Brothers, which was to become the largest textile machinery manufacturing business in the world.

Continuing on, you reach the Ramsden Memorial which stands in the centre of the village square. Erected in 1901, it is dedicated to W.H.F. Ramsden, who was the village doctor from 1864 to 1900. Behind is the old village bank, clear evidence of the village's former commercial standing. A short detour down Woods Lane, which was once the main road to Delph, stands Holy Trinity Church. Completed in 1793, it is one of Saddleworth's oldest surviving churches. Its clock was nicknamed the 'Dobcross Lie', because of its unreliable timekeeping.

Returning to the village square, why not enjoy some refreshment in the Swan Inn? Built in 1765, this traditional village pub has a rich history. In the mid-1700s, it was owned by the Wrigley family, some of whom emigrated to America and formed the Wrigley Chewing Gum company. Originally called the Kings Head, it is known locally as the Top House.

Leaving the village square, the route now ascends onto Lark Hill from where far reaching views can be enjoyed throughout the full range of the compass: Wharmton Hill, with its needle-like communications mast, dominates the skyline to the south. After crossing Harrop Edge Lane, make the steep descent to the A62 Huddersfield Road, which was the third and final turnpike road to cross the Pennines, at Standedge cutting. The name 'turnpike' derives from the spiked barrier that was placed across the road at the toll-bars.

Continuing on, the route passes the Old Bell Inn, which is a former 18<sup>th</sup> century coaching house. In 1835, the then Princess Victoria stayed here with her mother, whilst on their way to the York Festival. Beyond the old Delph railway station, which is now a private residence, you pass Bailey Mill and join the disused Delph Donkey railway line. Opened in 1849, it was a branch line of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) that connected Oldham, Greenfield and Delph to the main Huddersfield to Manchester route. It is believed that early services along the line were horse-drawn, giving the line its name. Passenger services ceased on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1955, although a limited freight service continued. In 1960, the Royal Train, carrying the Queen Mother, pulled into Delph station for a quiet overnight halt. The line finally closed on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1963 and is now the Delph Donkey Trail, which is popular with walkers,

cyclists and horse riders. Heading along this leafy trail, you pass the site of the former unmanned station that served the Measurements Factory. Demolished in the late 1980s, the factory produced precision clocks and instruments.

Further on you will pass one of the only remaining buildings of Bankfield Mill. Built in 1858, the mill produced woollen cloth until it was destroyed by fire in the 1940s. The local celebrated poet and writer, Ammon Wrigley worked at the mill from around 1883 until 1932.

Continuing further on, you will come to the site of Dobcross Halt. Originally opened in 1912, this small station was built of wood and was accessed from the road by a set of stone steps, which are still in existence today.

With the walk nearing its end, a fingerpost directs you to leave the trail towards Uppermill and the Brownhill Countryside Centre. Soon you will join the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, along which you will return to your start point where fine refreshments await at the Lime Kiln Café.

**This walk summary has been compiled from the original route which features in the local guidebook, *Saddleworth Discovery Walks*. The full route description, a map and detailed information about points of historical interest are contained in the book, which is available to buy from [www.saddleworthdiscoverywalks.co.uk](http://www.saddleworthdiscoverywalks.co.uk) or at local stockists.**