

Along the Tame Valley to Heights

Start: Millgate Car Park, Millgate, Delph

Distance: 8.2 kilometres/5 miles

Ascent: 270 metres/885 feet

Time: 3 hours

Introduction

Starting from the quaint little village of Delph this easy, delightful walk sets out along the Tame Valley, where you will see rich evidence of the area's historic and industrial past. At the head of the valley, you will pass through Denshaw, Saddleworth's most northerly village, which has seen human activity since the Stone Age. Leaving the valley, the route now crosses farmland to the 18th century Heights Chapel, which has appeared in several films and television productions. Here you can enjoy a rest in the Heights Pub before making the final short descent back into Delph.

Walk Description

Nestled at the convergence of the Castleshaw and Denshaw valleys, Delph derives its name from the old English word '*delf*', which means 'quarry'. Bakestones were quarried in the Castleshaw Valley, just to the north of the village: the three-quarter inch thick quarried tiles were used to bake oatcakes and muffins. The area was probably first populated around the time that a Roman garrison was stationed at the Castleshaw Fort in AD79. From the late 1700s, the area supported the thriving textile industry, and the centre of the village has changed little since the early 19th century.

The start point for this delightful walk is Millgate car park opposite the Co-operative Hall. Built in 1864, the hall is now a theatre and library and is managed by a local theatrical group called Saddleworth Players.

From the car park, take the footpath along the River Tame and cross Delph Bridge, adjacent to which is a stone cottage that bears a benchmark which marks the height of the floodwaters that swamped the village on 13th July 1872.

From here, the route continues along the Tame Valley to Pingle Mill where textile manufacturing has been carried out since 1777. Beyond the mill, the route returns to the peace and solitude of valley to reach the prominent remains of Linfitts Mill. The first recorded mill was built here in the early 1750s. Powered by a 31ft waterwheel, it was used as a fulling mill and remained in occupation until the 1930s. If time allows, it's worth exploring the ruins of this once-thriving industrial site with many of its walls, goits and engine beds still being clearly visible in the undergrowth. Further along the valley, a prominent leat can be seen on the right. Drawing water from the river, it fed the mill for operating machinery and washing textiles.

Further up the valley, the route follows a section of the Oldham Way Link through an exclusive housing estate which stands on the site of Denshaw Vale Print Works. Built in the early 1790s, the site was originally used as a woollen mill and was powered by a large waterwheel. Later it became a calico printing works. During the Second World War, the mill was used to produce camouflage netting for the Allied forces. The mill fell out of use some time in the 1950s and stood empty until it was cleared in 1996 to make way for the present housing development. Some of the original listed buildings have been retained and can be seen as you walk through the estate.

The route soon emerges into the village of Denshaw, which sits by the source of the River Tame on Saddleworth's northern fringes. Archaeological evidence indicates that the area has sustained human activity since the Stone Age and throughout the Bronze Age. The name Denshaw derives from the Old Norse language, indicating that a settlement may have existed here during the period of the Danelaw. Consisting mainly of smallholdings, the area did not support the wool and textile industry during the Industrial Revolution to the same extent as other nearby villages. The Junction Inn, which stands on the old Ripponden to Oldham turnpike road, was built in 1795 as a coaching house and provided rest and refreshments for travellers.

From the centre of the village the route passes Christ Church, which was built in 1863. In the church grounds stands a war memorial, which bears the names of 32 local men who gave their lives in the First

and Second World Wars. Beyond the ancient hamlet of Denshaw Fold, which originally dates back to the 16th century, you once again cross the River Tame and walk through several fields to reach Ox Hey Farm. From the farm, the route heads generally south across several fields to reach Lockwood Hey Farm, with its prominent arched window clearly visible in the gable end. Passing the front of the property, you soon emerge onto Broad Lane for the short walk to Heights.

The picturesque 'Heights Chapel' (St Thomas Friamere) was built in 1765 and has starred in a variety of films and television programmes. Although no longer used for regular worship, it is managed by the Churches Conservation Trust. Anyone wanting to take a look inside can borrow a key from the Royal Oak Inn or the church's caretaker, whose address is listed on the door. Adjacent to the church is the Royal Oak. Known locally as, 'Heights Pub', it serve fine ales whilst offering a warm welcome to walkers.

From the pub, the route now follows the Horseshoe Trail as the bridleway crosses several fields towards Delph Greave. Whilst descending these grassy fields, take time to admire the spectacular views of Broadstone Hill and across to the war memorial on the upper flanks of Dick Hill. Beyond, lies the wild and rugged Chew Valley with its dark gritstone edges forming the valley's jagged rim. Below and straight ahead is Delph village with its prominent main street clearly visible running through the centre of the village, along which you will soon be walking.

After crossing the lush fields, the route descends Lodge Lane onto Denshaw Road, before returning through the centre of Delph village.

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 or at local stockists.