



Waymarked Walk No. 8

# Bolton-on-Dearne to Mexborough

### Starting point

Bolton-on-Dearne railway station or TPT car park on Mexborough Road

### Distance

4 1/2 miles (7.2km)

### Time

Allow yourself up to 4 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: Bolton-on-Dearne and Mexborough are served by regular bus routes from the major towns of South Yorkshire. There are also services which link up Mexborough to Bolton-on-Dearne

By Train: From Sheffield and Rotherham there is a service to Mexborough and another to Bolton-on-Dearne

By Car: There are areas for parking cars near to Bolton-on-Dearne railway station and at the TPT car park on Mexborough Road

Waterbus: If you arrive in Mexborough on a Sunday or a Bank Holiday you could take the canal trip through to Doncaster. The waterbus is signposted as you approach the town centre

Mining subsidence has helped to create large areas of open water at Denaby Ings, which is now managed as a nature reserve by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

### The rights of the common people

This, the final section of the Dearne Way, takes you down the River Dearne to the River Don, near Mexborough, and to a scene of relative tranquillity which belies a chequered, barbaric and often tragic past.

In Mexborough, in the 17th century, riots against field enclosure were frequent, as the landless peasant communities were stripped of their rights over Common Lands. Enclosure involved the division of large arable and communal grazing lands into smaller fields, by private landowners. Enforced by the Enclosures Acts, this process had been going on in Mexborough since 1688. Some observers argued that the planting of so many hedgerows was destroying the traditional landscape. The same sentiment is echoed in concern over the farming community removing our hedgerows today.

Around 200 years later, when coal mining became the main industry, disputes between the miners and their employers were commonplace. Disputes were rare at Manvers Main, but at Denaby and Cadeby strikes and lock-outs were regular occurrences. The colliers gained a reputation for dogged militancy, whilst the owners were renowned as uncompromising. Tension spilled over in the winter of 1903 with the great 'bay-muck' strike, which ended when the employers evicted 720 families from company-owned cottages in Denaby.

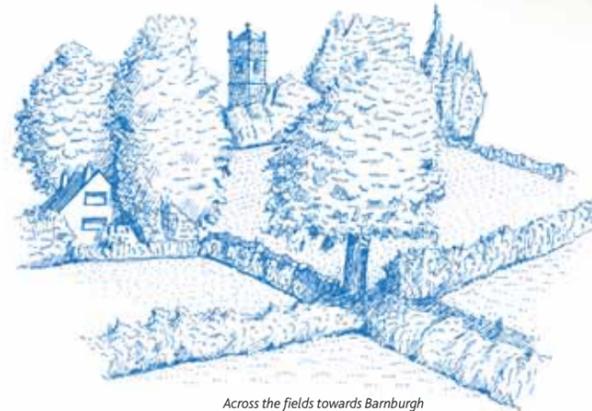


1 If starting from the railway station, walk downhill past the Saxon church of St Andrew's, with its 1000-year-old nave, down Angel Street crossing over the River Dearne to the car park. Turn left, picking up the Dearne Way and Trans Pennine Trail. The remainder of the route will be alongside the river.

2 Follow the TPT with the river on your left. Across the river is the new flood storage and wetland habitats of Adwick Washlands, created in 2012 by the Dearne Valley Green Heart Partnership. Along the river you may catch a glimpse of a kingfisher darting along the surface, or a heron waiting patiently for lunch. Look back to St Andrew's Church, built in sandstone, in contrast to St Peter's Church on the horizon in Barnburgh, built of white limestone – both characterising local geology for each site.

3 The distinctive tower of St Peter's Church at Barnburgh marks the scene of a remarkable tale. Sir Percival Cresacre – a Knight's Templar in the 15th century – whilst returning home one night by horse from Doncaster, was attacked by a wild cat. The ensuing battle, lasting several hours, ended in the death of both the cat and the man in the doorway of the church. Cross over the footbridge to Adwick car park. Carefully cross the road and follow the floodbank path, now with the river on your right.

St Peter's Church, Barnburgh



4 As you walk along the riverbank, note how different the landscape is on the other side of the valley. The pattern of hedgerows and trees on the Barnburgh side probably owes much to the great estate owners, the Montagues, who made sure that the pits they owned were well-hidden from their nearby residence at Melton Hall. Thus Barnburgh village remained much as it always had been, whilst industrial communities were spawned around Bolton-on-Dearne and Mexborough.

11 Up the hill towards Mexborough town centre are the remains of Mexborough Castle. Built by the Normans to guard a ford across the River Don, the castle is on the site of the Battle of Maisbyly of 488.



Mexborough Castle

5 Back in the 17th and 18th centuries, before any mineshafts were sunk, blood was stirring here over the enclosure of Common Lands by private landowners.

6 As you leave the bend in the river, go over the stile on your left, continue for a short distance, then take the steps up to the disused railway. Abandoned in the late 1960s, the embankment now forms part of Denaby Ings Nature Reserve and a large number of colourful plants and butterflies are worth looking out for in the spring and summer months.



Tortoiseshell on bramble

7 A path bears right and drops down from the railway. Cross the wooden bridge beside the roadbridge to the main road.



Great-crested grebe

8 Denaby Ings has long been known by local naturalists as an excellent area for studying wildlife. Wildfowl that can usually be seen include mallard, teal, great-crested grebe, tufted duck, mute swan, coot and moorhen. Among the winter visitors are wigeon, pintail and goldeneye.

9 The Dearne Way follows the River Dearne to the back of the hill, to meet with the River Don; then along the old canal towpath towards Mexborough. If you want to take a less scenic short cut, continue along Pastures Road towards Mexborough.

10 From 1751, until the railways came at the end of the 19th century, the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation was to carry the industrial products of the Sheffield region to the port of Hull, for shipment around the globe.

