

Take the footpath on the right and follow it through two fields . BR across the first field to the stile in the far corner. When you reach the road TL 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.

Enter the woods. Follow the main path down the hill, through the woods. BR at the way marker, 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 Denby Hall Lane TR, then left away from the buildings. Follow the path across the fields with Baycroft Wood on your left. Cross the stile and TL 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 BL down the hill towards the River Dearne. At the bottom TR 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 southwest 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 course.

The Dearne Way trail is a long distance footpath along the river course. Details of the route through the upper Dearne Valley can be viewed via link.



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

Quarrying is a long-established industry in the Skelmanthorpe area. There are significant deposits of soft clay used in pipe production, but much of the associated stone can be crushed to produce pipe products as well. You will more than likely pass an active quarry or the signs of a worked out one. The nearby quarry is still in occasional use.

TL and follow the small valley side. At the T-junction TR 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 BR, 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.

Updated October 2025



The former pack-horse bridge near Lower Putting Mill.

## The Oxley Trail



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



### Getting Here

Skelmanthorpe is served by buses from Huddersfield, Wakefield and Holmfirth. There are small car parks at the bottom of New Street next to the Council Offices/Library and at Skelmanthorpe Community Centre at the bottom of Lodge Street, where toilets are available when the Centre is open, but this varies daily.



Local services can be found by the link to our website.



### Denby Dale Walkers are Welcome

Please check out our website for further information. We are supported by Denby Dale Parish Council.



Walking in and around Denby Dale

## The Oxley Trail



A fun day out exploring the beautiful countryside in and around the Skelmanthorpe and Deffer Wood area. The full trail is 7 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.



Inside cruck barn showing roof beams

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.

## Start: the junction of Lodge Street and Commercial Road, Skelmanthorpe

Walk along Commercial Road, away from the village centre, and TL 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. Number 6 Queen St is now a wonderful small museum in a former Weaver's Cottage

At the bottom of Queen St TR 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 Whistlestop Valley railway line on your left 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, BR through the gate and up the short drive. TL 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.

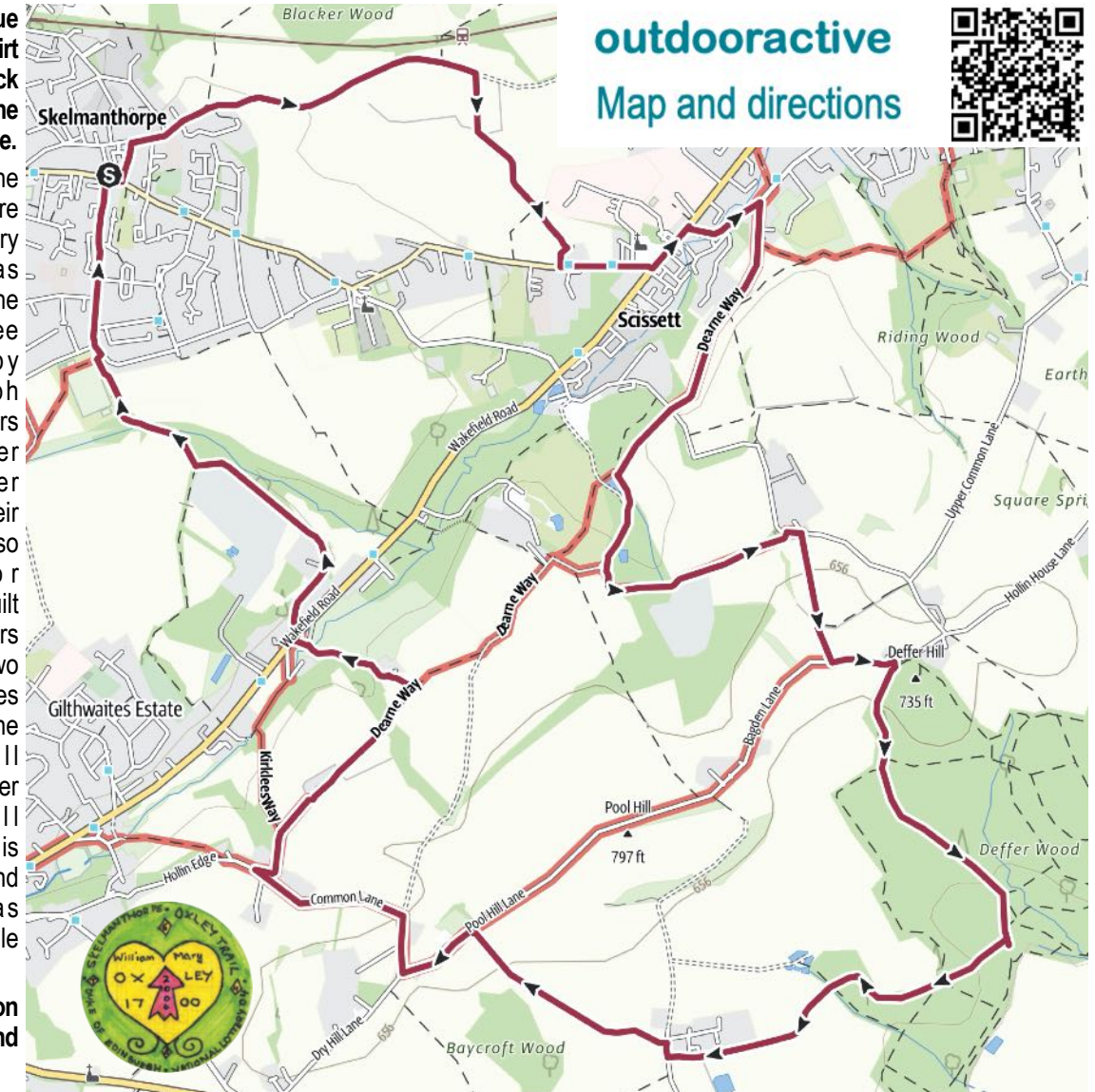
TL, cross over the main road via the pelican crossing, and continue to the first right turn – Barnsley Road. Follow this round the bend to Lower Common Lane on your right. Follow Lower Common Lane up the hill, with views over Scissett up to Emley and Emley Moor transmitter on your right. At the

road junction continue straight ahead onto a dirt track. Follow the track down and just before the pond BL 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 and restaurant, but was originally built as a single dwelling in 1840.

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

Hay Royds pit was established in 1908, the sole remaining independent pit in the area until its closure in 2012. 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 operated on a drift system, which meant it had no winding gear on the surface so much associated with coal mines. The drift entrance went out under Wheatley Hill Farm to the coal-face.



Continue until a metalled road is encountered. To your left you can glimpse Wheatley Hill Farm. TR along 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.