



All work and no play

Discover how local industries and working from home shaped village life before the Industrial Revolution.

Time: 40 - 60 mins

Distance: 1 mile

Landscape: rural

Hoylandswaine is a pleasant but seemingly unremarkable village in South Yorkshire. But like most places, if you look beneath the surface it has an interesting story to tell.

On this trail we'll find out how it's geographical position, as well as the climate, geology and soils once made this quiet place a hive of industry.

Go back in time to a world where home and work were inescapably intertwined and homework had a whole new meaning!

Location:

Hoylandswaine, South Yorkshire

Start:

Hoylandswaine village sign, Barnsley Road, S36 7JA

Finish:

Pye Flatts wildflower meadow, Cooper Lane

Grid reference:

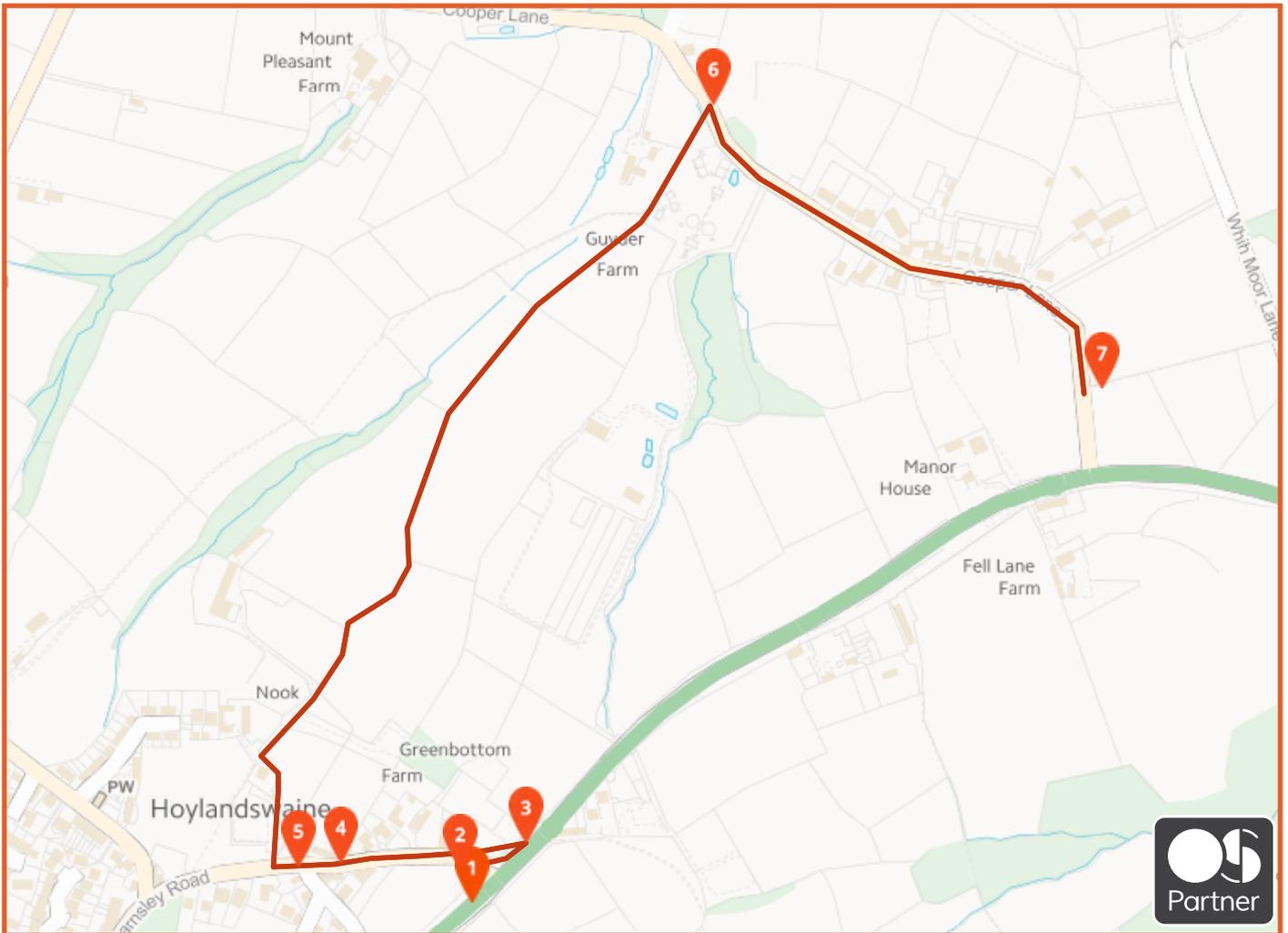
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Keep an eye out for:

Free guided tours of the wildflower meadow are available from the site owner, Granville Danny Clarke. To arrange a tour contact him in advance on 07966 507 626 (www.granvilledclarke.co.uk).



Route and stopping points



- 01 Hoylandswaine village sign
- 02 Water trough opposite the Lord Nelson pub
- 03 Nipping Row Cottages, Barnsley Road
- 04 335 Barnsley Road
- 05 End of Skinpit Lane
- 06 Guyder Bottom, Cooper Lane
- 07 Gates at Pye Flatts meadow, Cooper Lane

01 Hoylandswaine village sign

We start by the village sign to find out about the origins of this unusual place name.

The village was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Holan*. The first part of the name comes from the Old English word 'hoh' meaning a hill spur or ridge so 'hoy land' described farming land on high ground at the top of a slope. The 'swaine' part was added in the twelfth century and refers to the land being owned by an Anglo-Saxon called Swein.

In a short while this elevated geographical position will become obvious to us. As we explore the village we'll find out why this high land led to the growth of several local industries.

Directions

From the sign walk a few steps away from the main road (with the wall on your left). Opposite the entrance to the Lord Nelson car park is a small paved area with a bench and water trough.

02 Water trough opposite the Lord Nelson pub

This stone water trough offers us a clue to a key ingredient in the success of the village. Water is essential not just for drinking, cooking and washing but as a source of power and raw material for industry.

Many towns and cities the world over are established along the banks of rivers and coasts for easy access to water. But, as we have already found out, this village is built on high land, so where did the water come from?

Geography once again provides the answer. First the high altitude of the Pennines (the mountain range stretching from Derbyshire in the South, to the Scottish border in the north) creates an environment that is frequently cool, overcast and wet. Second the underlying geology means that natural springs and wells abound.

And so, despite its ridge-top position, Hoylandswaine always had a plenty of water and at the next stop we'll discover why this was so important to the village.

Once there would have been a number of troughs and wells like this until mains water reached the village in the 1920s. Every year this particular water trough is decorated with murals created by local school children. This follows the ancient custom of giving thanks to and blessing water, a custom better known in neighbouring Derbyshire where wells and water sources are ritually 'dressed' with flowers.

Directions

With your back to the well, cross the road and turn right along the pavement away from the Lord Nelson. The pavement bends round to the left and joins the main Barnsley Road. Stop here and look at the end of a row of houses opposite known as Nipping Row Cottages.

03 Nipping Row Cottages, Barnsley Road

At first glance we seem to be standing in front of a row of fairly nondescript houses, but look more closely... notice they all have basements with windows. It's a feature you don't expect to see in basement rooms.

At the last stop we learnt that this area of high ground experiences a cool, dull and wet climate. These factors influenced one of the village's most important industries: linen weaving. The cottages opposite were built for linen workers.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, nearby Barnsley was an important centre for linen production. Carts laden with hemp were pulled by teams of horses along rough, unmade roads over the Pennines from Barnsley to Hoylandswaine. In cottages like the ones opposite, the hemp would be woven by hand into cloth before being transported back to Barnsley for bleaching and finishing.

Weaving looms were kept in the basement because the damp air made it less likely that the yarn would snap during weaving. Wool, by contrast, tended to be woven on the upper floors of cottages where large windows let in lots of light. The basement windows in this row of cottages are one of the last clues we have that this industry ever took place here. As the Industrial Revolution spread, this type of home working (or cottage industry) declined.

The invention of power looms mechanised the weaving process, increased efficiency and output – and transformed working communities. Manufacturers built factories and warehouses in more central locations like Barnsley, Leeds and Manchester. Villagers in places like Hoylandswaine were forced to move or find other sources of employment.

Directions

Retrace your steps to the Lord Nelson and continue up the pavement on the right side of the road for about 100 metres. Find a stone cottage on the right at no 355. Look over the wall just before it at the stone outbuilding in the garden.

04 355 Barnsley Road

This small stone building - no bigger than a modern garage - was once a nail-making forge. There are actually three rooms inside, and each was a separate nail-shop with its own forge.

During the eighteenth century, nail making was an important industry and the village had several other forges. You might wonder why there was such a cluster of nail-makers in one place.

The reason was largely due to the local geology. Nails are made from iron and a seam of ironstone runs roughly north - south between Penistone and Barnsley. The other elements important for iron making were also locally available: extensive woods for making charcoal and local rivers for water power.

Like linen weaving, nail making was a small-scale cottage industry. It was also a family business and often the women and children would work alongside the men making smaller nails to supplement the family income. Nail making was 'piecework'; workers were paid per item rather than per hour. Working here was hard, tiring, and repetitive. A thousand nails per day was normal.

By the mid-1800s home working began to decline. Like linen production, factories where nails could be mass-produced at a greater rate gradually superseded the work hand-made by craftsmen.

Directions

Continue up Barnsley Road for about 20 metres. Stop by the next road on the left called Skinpit Lane.

05 End of Skinpit Lane

Place names and street names often provide clues to the geography and history of a place. And none more so than here- Skinpit Lane.

A 'skin pit' was a tank that was used to soak animal hides for tanning. Not surprisingly then, there was once an abattoir here where cows, sheep and pigs were slaughtered and their hides sold on to a tanner.

It's thought (but unproven) that there was once a tannery nearby. Older villagers remember collecting bark from the local woods for the tanning process. When crushed, tree bark releases tannins which preserve the animal skin and make them tough, durable and water-repellent.

Directions

Continue up Barnsley Road for another 20 metres. Look on the right for a track signposted as a public footpath. Follow the track for about 100 metres with the hedge of the bowling green on the left. Go round the first house and at the junction follow the track round to the right.

After about 75 metres the track bends round to the left but the public footpath continues straight ahead. Follow the footpath down the left side of the field for just over half a kilometre. At the bottom the footpath meets some tress and there is a kissing gate. Go through the gate and follow the narrow path down the side of the sewage farm. When you meet a road (Cooper Lane) cross over to the gate about 10 metres to the left.

06 Guyder Bottom, Cooper Lane

We have already discovered how the lie of the land and the climate influenced small-scale cottage industries like linen production and nail making. Another factor is what's found right under your feet.

Below ground is the South Yorkshire coalfield. Coal is found in layers called 'beds' or 'seams'. Here at the western edge of the coalfield one of the seams comes very close to the surface and is easy to access. This jumbled pile of stones in the field here is evidence of an underground mine.

Mining in this area began from the early 1800s. In those early days workers used primitive techniques including 'day-holes' and 'drift mines'. As the term suggests, miners dug a small hole that allowed them to extract the coal by daylight. Once the miners reached the coal seam they tunnelled or 'drifted' along it, removing the coal using picks and shovels, until they joined up with the next day-hole.

At the height of production the mine here at Guyder Bottom employed 30 people and produced around 12,000 tons of coal each year.

By 1969 the small mine had become uneconomical and closed down. The only evidence left of this dark, subterranean world is found in this field. The large flat stone you can see was a loading platform where coal was packed onto the wagons.

Directions

Facing the gate, turn right and follow Cooper Lane steadily uphill. Stop after about 200 metres when you reach the entrance to Hill Top House on the right. Continue up Cooper Lane for about 300 metres until the lane levels off. Look on the right side for a pair of ornamental gates into the last field before the main road.

07 Gates at Pye Flatts meadow, Cooper Lane

Let's stop here by these beautiful, ornamental gates which sum up the spirit of the village. Look for the magpie on the top right which symbolises the place name Pye Flatts (*pye* is an old word for magpie).

Notice that the magpie is sitting upon pit-head gear associated with coal mining. At the bottom right is the surveyors' symbol for coal measures. In between you'll see a colourful rainbow and a collection of lines and circles that represent the wildflowers found in the meadow through the seasons.

This is one of the last remaining hay meadow grasslands sites in the UK and the only known one on a coal measure soil. If you look across the dry-stone wall to the next field you will see the chemical green stands in stark contrast to the natural colours of this wildflower meadow.

Until the 1950s there were many traditional grassland sites like this across the UK. However, because of food shortages after the Second World War all available productive land was put to use to grow crops and feed the population. At the same time farmers were encouraged to use chemicals to produce higher yields. This practice led to the loss of a staggering 97% of our wildflower meadows.

As you follow the path across the second field notice the significant dip in the ground – this was where people once dug for surface deposits of coal, as well as clay. Such uneven ground was not suitable for ploughing and harvesting with modern machinery. So these fields were left to nature.

This meadow marks the end of our trail around Hoylandswaine. Though this village on high land might not be one of the most visited parts of Yorkshire, it tells an important story about changing village life and how we once lived and worked close to home.

In spite of approximately 100 new houses being built during the last 30 years, shops and other amenities have disappeared including the post office, village store, 'chippy' and cobbler. Today Hoylandswaine is a commuter village with most residents travelling to nearby Barnsley or Sheffield.

However like much of Britain, fast broadband is opening up opportunities for more people to 'work from home'. Instead of leaving villages, more people are then around during the day to use local shops and services and perhaps quiet villages like these will gain a new lease of life.

Directions

Once you have explored the meadow you can easily return to Hoylandswaine village. With the gates behind you, turn left and continue to the junction. Turn right onto Barnsley Road and follow it until the village sign appears on your left.

 Trail complete – we hope you have enjoyed it!