



Hayley Merrick

2 Harle Syke and Briercliffe

START: Queen Street Mill, Queen Street (GPS waypoint SD 868 348)

DISTANCE: 3 miles (5km)

DIFFICULTY: 🏃🏻 **HEIGHT GAIN:** ⬆️

APPROX. TIME: 1 hour 30 minutes

PARKING: Available at the beginning of the route

ROUTE TERRAIN: Woodland paths, farmland, fields, tarmacked paths, wooden boardwalk

FACILITIES: None along the route

SUITABILITY: Not suitable for those with prams, trampers or wheelchair users, dogs permitted

OS MAPS: Landranger 103 (Blackburn and Burnley), Explorer OL21 (South Pennines)

Explore the woodland and moorland countryside around Harle Syke and Briercliffe, with this three-mile route along sections of the Burnley Way.

This walk should take around an hour and a half to complete, but could take longer if the weather has been poor.



2 Harle Syke and Briercliffe

Travel across open fields, over rolling hills and through quaint woodland with this Burnley-based route.

Unfortunately, due to the terrain and number of stiles there are to traverse, we cannot class this as an accessible walk. Dogs are permitted but need to be kept on a lead through farmland.

Please be aware too that during or after bad weather, sections of this route will be muddy.

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HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Harle Syke is a small village within the parish of Briercliffe, three miles north of Burnley. The area is very popular with walkers, with the Burnley Way and the Bronte Way both passing through the parish, and the Pennine Way only a short distance from the area.

The name Harle Syke comes from the name of a person – Harle – and a local word meaning ditch, syke. The area's history is dominated by the textile industry, with Harle Syke previously home to 11 weaving firms working out of seven mills. The village apparently sprung up around the cotton weaving mills, with the majority of the buildings dating back to the Victorian era. There was also a coal mine in the village that used to supply coal to the cotton mills in Burnley.

In 1850, it's said that a group of men from nearby Haggate founded the first cotton mill in the area, Harle Syke Mill, known today as Oxford Mill. The success of Harle Syke Mill led to further construction, and the village steadily expanded up until the First World War.

QUEEN STREET MILL

The Queen Street Mill Manufacturing Company was established in 1894 and eight men, with jobs ranging from weaver to headteacher, made up its first board of directors. The company built the mill, which was four-storeys, with a large single-storey weaving shed, between 1894 and 1895. However, following a serious fire at the mill in October 1918, it was remodelled into a single-storey building, space being taken from the weaving sheds for a new preparation area.

The mill was originally equipped with 900 single shuttle looms, which were capable of producing plain cotton calico, known as grey cloth. Later, the company installed a further 366 looms at the adjacent Primrose Mill, known by the workers as the bottom shed. Once completed, the cloth was taken by horse and cart and train to finishers for bleaching and dyeing.

The start of the twentieth century saw the whole of Burnley's textile industry reach the height of its prosperity, and by 1910 there were around 99,000 power looms in the town. However this was not to last and within a few years, the First World War brought on the collapse of England's textile industry.

The walker's view

Hayley Merrick travels to Burnley for this walk

“ This walk route was definitely one of the trickiest I've been involved in since starting work with the magazine, but the finished route is a fantastic one and it's well worth heading over to the east of our county to try it out.



The first draft of this route was slightly longer, but on travelling over to test it out, we encountered a few issues. The bad weather had rendered many of the fields impassable and one major stretch was closed for repair due to the amount of rain that'd fallen. So it was back to the drawing board and time to replot sections of the route.

We kept the first half of the route the same, but made a few changes from where you head straight on at Proctor Cote House to join up with a section of the well-trodden Burnley Way. The final route turned out to be a really enjoyable one and ironically, with much more in terms of scenery and wildlife than the first option!

The starting point of this walk is the Queen Street Mill and there's plenty of parking available here if you choose to drive. The mill chimney is also a bit of a landmark and you can see it on the horizon most of the way around the walk.

Heading away from the mill, the walk takes you through a few trees before heading over open fields. When we were walking through Cockden Farm, which is a public right of way, there was a dog chained up that made us jump, but just keep walking up ahead and you soon reach a gate. From here you head over the fields filled with moorland grasses,

down to the River Don, then back up quite a steep hill to reach another field at the top. There are some remnants of stone steps leading up the hill here, but they were a bit slippery so I stuck to the right hand side of them.

When you reach Proctor Cote House as the road bends to the right, you need to keep straight on slightly uphill, ignoring the road to the right and track to your left. This takes you up by Extwistle Hall and onto the Burnley Way, which we follow as it takes you past the farm and through the fields, then right, downhill to meet the River Don again.



As you cross the River Don, a woodland track takes you through the woods and up some stone steps, a pathway that's sometimes referred to as the Oggly-Coggly. This takes you right to the top of the woodland to a T-junction of paths. Here, you can go right to follow the Burnley Way over the fields and back to the beginning of the walk, but we opted to go left, down a country lane to travel past St James' Church.

One thing I'd recommend if it's been raining heavily would be to wear your wellies on this walk rather than walking boots. Sections can get quite muddy and I enjoyed the route more when I wasn't worrying about ruining my boots! ”

Visit Lancashire



Don't miss...

St James' Church

Church Street, Briercliffe

The grade II listed St James' Church can be seen at the end of this walk, just around the corner from Queen Street Mill. It was built between 1839 and 1841, with most of the money used to build it coming from public subscription. It was designed by Lancaster architect, Edmund Sharp, while the later changes – such as the new steeple – were made to the church by Paley and Austin.

The church is constructed in sandstone and has a stone slate roof and inside, the galleries are supported by cast iron columns. Outside, the churchyard contains the war graves of five soldiers from World War I and two from the Second World War.



Wildlife watch

With so many terrains and habitats covered on this walk, there's a lot to see wildlife-wise so keep your eyes peeled. Waterside birds like coot, moorhen, heron and kingfisher can be seen, as well as sparrowhawk and great spotted woodpecker.

Come spring and summer, the woodlands and riverbanks along this route will be filled with colour, thanks to marsh marigold, bluebell, wood sorrel, orchids and scabious.



Queen Street Mill Textile Museum

Once a thriving weaving mill, Queen Street Mill is today preserved as a museum, taking you back in time to the Victorian era when steam ran the world.

Queen Street is the only place in the world where you can see an operational steam-powered weaving mill and the museum's collection – along with that of its sister museum, Helmshore Mills Textile Museum – has been designated as being of national importance.

Visitors to the museum can see demonstrations of the Victorian steam engine, boilers and Lancashire looms.

The Oscar-winning film, The King's Speech, starring Colin Firth, Helena-Bonham Carter and Geoffrey Rush, was also filmed here, with the weaving shed used in a key scene.

So, whether you're interested in local or social history, textiles and textile machinery or just looking for an afternoon out with a difference, the sights, sounds and smells of Queen Street Mill bring the textile industry vividly to life!

The mill is open from 12pm until 4pm, Tuesday to Thursday from March 2014, then from 12pm until 5pm Tuesday to Friday during April.

Queen Street Mill Textile Museum is part of the Pennine Lancashire Museum Group. For more details and further information regarding admission fees and opening times, visit visitlancashire.com/penninelancashiremuseums



Cut out this page and take with you...

2 Harle Syke and Briercliffe

QUEEN STREET, BRIERCLIFFE, BURNLEY, LANCASHIRE, BB10 2HX

A three mile walk through woodland, over open fields and through farmland around the Burnley village of Harle Syke.

Sections of this route will be muddy during or after bad weather, so please take care.



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2 Your walk, step-by-step

START From Queen Street Mill, head down the hill away from the town. Follow the path through the metal gateposts passing a building on your left, with a sign that reads 'Briercliffe Rovers'. Carry on through some trees and when you reach a T-junction at the end, turn left down a track, ignoring the gate ahead and the track to your right.

When the path bends to the left, head straight on and through the gate into the field ahead. Cross over the field and when you reach the far side, head towards the bottom left hand corner to a stile. Climb over then turn right to emerge onto Todmorden Road.



Turn right down the road then left into Big Tree Lane, **A** passing Cockden Farm and heading over a stile to the left when you reach a wooden gate.

"When we tested this route, there was a dog on a chain in the farmyard which made us jump a bit, so please be aware!"

Head straight on, slightly uphill. When you reach a gate in a fence, go on, heading into the field.

Follow the fence on your right hand side and when you reach the end, go diagonally right across the field towards a yellow marker and stile. Travel over the stile and head for the wall ahead and the marker on your right, across the grass.

Follow the marker downhill and to the right, between two pylons. Head towards the River Don and the footbridge below, taking care with your footing if the weather has been poor.

"As you make your way downhill, there will be a memorial bench to your left on the side of the hill – take a minute to admire the view"

Pass over the footbridge and go straight on, walking uphill along the wire fence boundary. Head up to a stile, cross it and carry on over another field, still following the fence boundary.



On reaching the next marker, keep on straight – again keeping close to the fence – and follow it around. When you reach a metal gate and the end of the fencing, exit the field by carefully climbing over the stone step stile, which can be found to the right hand side of the metal gate.



Turn right down the lane and when you reach the bend, you will see Proctor Cote House on your left. **B** Keep straight ahead, ignoring the road, which continues to the right, and the track running next to the house.



Head straight and walk along the track, passing the ruins of Extwistle Hall on your left after around 800 metres. On reaching a gate and cattle grid, keep walking straight through the farm. You will reach another gate and stile – again continue on, climbing over the stile to enter a field.

Follow the wall to your right, walking downhill and over two further stiles, keeping the wall on your right hand side. When the wall ends, follow the wooden fence boundary, which should be to your left, as you continue downhill.



On reaching the next fence with a stile, **C** turn right following the Burnley Way marker post – do not head over the stile. Follow the fence, keeping it to your left hand side, and travel over a stile and downhill towards the trees. Continue on to eventually reach another wooden Burnley Way marker and then a footbridge.

Go over the footbridge and follow the path around to the left, over a stile, along a wooden boardwalk and then up the stone steps into woodland.



"These stone steps are locally referred to as the 'Oggly-Coggly'. Take care as you climb them as they can be slippery"

When you reach the top of the steps, walk along the path to reach a T-junction. Turn left away from the Burnley Way marker and head down the track. Climb over a stile and then take a right **D** to walk straight on down a tarmac track towards the chimneys in the distance.

Continue on, ignoring a track that soon branches off to the right, and when you reach the road at the top, turn right. You will pass St James' Church on your left and Queen Street Mill will be on your right. When you reach the end of the road, take a right and head back to the mill and the beginning of the walk.

Walk images provided by Hayley Merrick

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