

Socialscene

Out and about in Oldham

life in Oldham

How Ben's poem is now reality

This is our third feature in a series of seasonal articles aimed at encouraging people to get out and about, explore the borough and get healthy in the process. The walks are suitable for all age groups. Points of interest, and places to stop for refreshment are highlighted. With the help of the Oldham Ramblers' Association, Oldham Council and Countryside Rangers we hope to reintroduce you to the beauty on our own doorstep.

Walk: Daisy Nook Countryside Park
Distance: Around 3 miles. There are numerous points at which you can make the choice of shortening or lengthening the walk.
Time: Around one and a half hours at leisurely pace
Calorie burn: 500+
How do I get there?: From Oldham follow Ashton Road out of the centre and turn right onto Coalpit Lane and then left onto Stannybrook Road and past the garden centre onto Newmarket Road and the signposted countryside centre.
Public transport: The nearest bus stop to the countryside centre is on Newmarket Road. Call GMPTE on 0161 228 7811 for bus details and times.
Parking: Free parking at countryside centre.

There are a number of different options and routes to follow both into Daisy Nook Country Park and when you actually start walking. For this walk we are concentrating on following parts of the history trail, but by looking at the map you can make detours if you wish.

This is a leisurely walk that is clearly defined and suitable for all age groups. It is a great way to appreciate Daisy Nook and the River Medlock Valley.

Home to a surprisingly diverse eco-system, there are wetland habitats with wild-fowl and mixed woodland with squirrels, woodpeckers and tree species like oak, beech and hazel. Wildflowers include rare and familiar species.

(This area was originally known as the village of Waterhouses. It was in 1855 that the name changed after the famous Lancashire poet and dialect writer Ben Brierley penned his first major work, called 'A Day Out', and described a ramble to a fictional beauty spot called Daisy Nook. The locals were quick to grab the name for their own.)

We suggest that you start at the John Howarth Countryside Centre and Ranger's Office.

There is parking here and facilities including toilets and a cafe. Set off down the trail clearly marked as 'history'.

2 After a short distance you will come to a point where a footpath crosses. You now have a choice of whether you want to walk clockwise or anti-clockwise. For the purposes of this article we will turn right into Boodle Wood and follow the history trail in the direction of Limehurst with the River Medlock on the left. There is a steady but manageable climb. (The closed woodland is mainly of hawthorns and alders which help to stabilise the soil.)

3 Eventually you will come to a point where a footpath forks off to the right, but stay on the trail which veers to the left. As you approach the river, and again veer right, there is a wall at the end of the drive on the old coach road. (This is all that remains of Riversvale Hall, which was once the home of the Bradbury family. It was demolished in

1947/8 after falling into disrepair.)

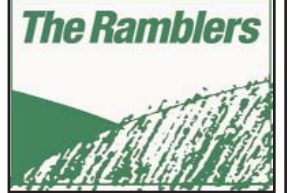
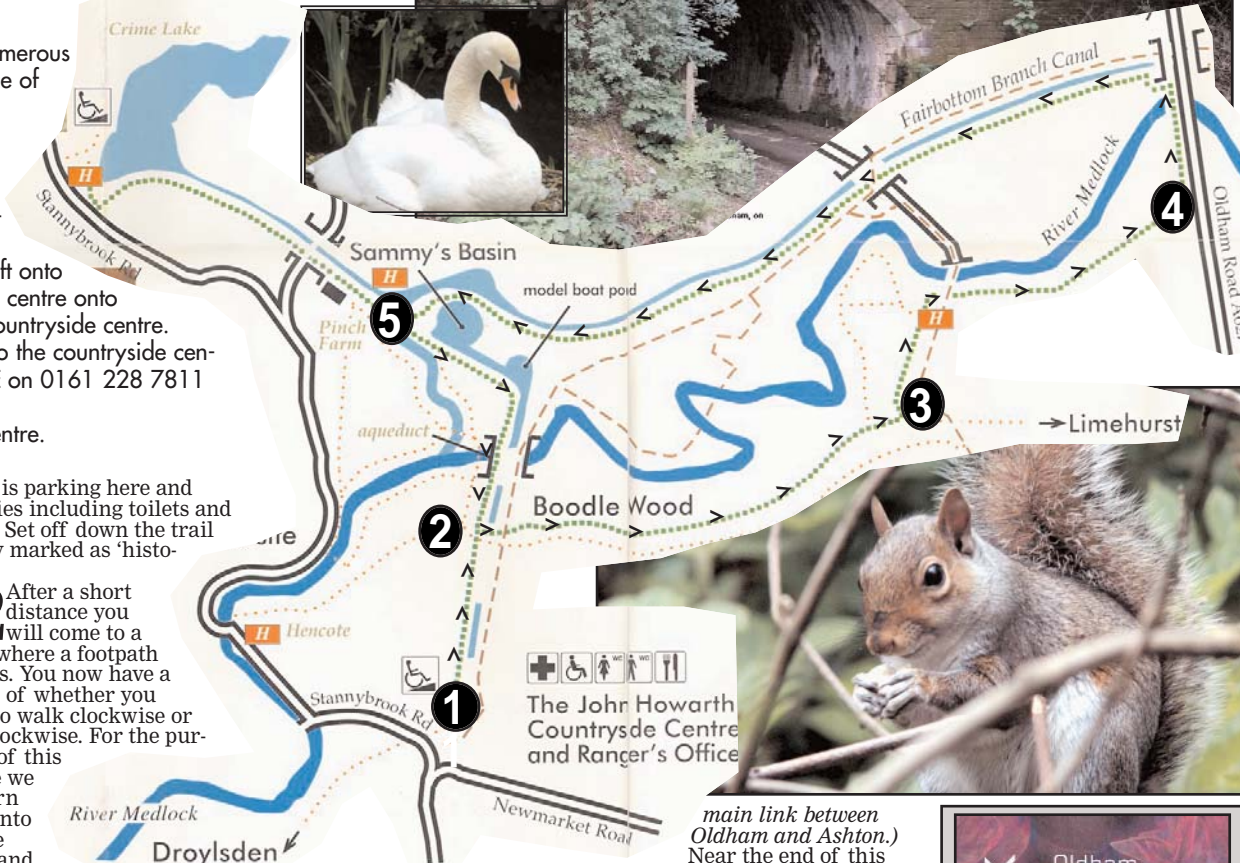
4 Continue along the trail that brings you up towards Oldham Road (A627).

5 Turn left and walk adjacent to the road and, after crossing the river, the trail turns left with the Fairbottom Branch Canal on your right. You now follow a fairly straight route back on the opposite side of the River Medlock. (A short distance from the aqueduct on the opposite side of the canal is evidence of old sidings which probably formed a link with the Bardsley Colliery. The aqueduct itself crosses the old coach road which used to be the

main link between Oldham and Ashton.) Near the end of this stretch you will see the model boat pond on the left and then Sammy's Basin.

5 Go round the basin and the trail will then take you back up to the start point. Alternatively, if you are still full of energy, take a quick detour and head right up to Crime Lake. (The lake developed as a result of canal work in 1794. The valley gradually flooded, swamping two small cottages which are still at the bottom of the lake. At the turn of the century a tourist steamer used to run on the lake.)

After enjoying this additional branch, come back on yourself and stay on the route back to the start point.



Special price for ramblers

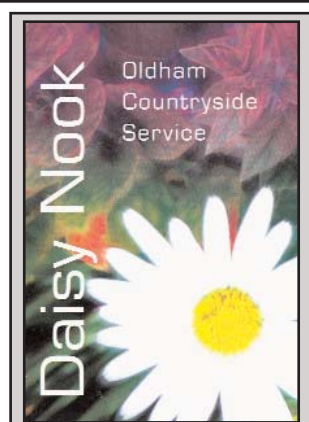
THE Oldham Advertiser has teamed up with the Ramblers' Association to offer readers the chance of saving 20 per cent on their first year's membership. For over 70 years, the association has been working on behalf of walkers everywhere, safeguarding the beauty of the countryside, maintaining paths and increasing access to Britain's landscapes. As a registered charity, the group's work is funded almost entirely by subscriptions and donations... and members get a terrific range of benefits:

- 'Walk Britain' - a year-book and accommodation guide.
 - Discretionary discounts in many outdoor stores.
 - Quarterly magazine 'Walk'.
 - Access to Ordnance Survey map library.
 - Free information service.
 - Optional membership of a local group, with walks and social activities.
- To join, simply complete the coupon below or call 020 7339 8500 quoting "GRM" to pay by credit/debit card. In addition, if you pay by Direct Debit you will receive 13 months membership for the price of 12. Return this coupon to: The Ramblers' Association, Freepost SW15, London SE1 7BR

● I/we would like to join at the special reduced price (tick box) of:
 Single annual membership of £19.20 (normally £24)
 Joint annual membership of £25.60 (normally £32) for two adults at one address
 ● I/we enclose a cheque made payable to the Ramblers' Association for

● £.....
 ● Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss (delete as appropriate)
 ● Initials.....
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 ● Address.....
 ● Postcode.....

(Offer ends June 30, 2005. Offer is not open to existing members)



This week's walk is available as a leaflet from any tourist information point in Oldham, including libraries.

Next week: Don't miss our guide for a historical walk around Foxdenton

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