

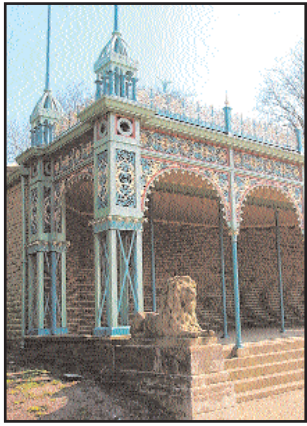
# Socialscene

Out and about in Oldham

# life in Oldham

## The spirit of Oldham in one simple walk

**Walk:** Alexandra Park Circular  
**Distance:** Three and a half miles  
**Time:** Around two hours  
**Calorie burn:** 350+  
**How do I get there?:** From the centre of Oldham, go down Park Road from the King Street Roundabout and eventually turn left onto Alt Lane.  
**Public transport:** Call GMPTE on 0161 228 7811 for details of buses.  
**Parking:** There is free parking at the visitor centre at Park Bridge.



**L**AST week we went urban with a historic walk around Oldham town centre, but this week we go off-road again with a pleasant walk around Alexandra Park and its surrounding areas.

This is a fascinating walk that, in many ways, captures the spirit of Oldham better than most – taking in our industrial past, great buildings, a breathtaking view and areas of natural beauty where wildlife abounds. Enjoy it.

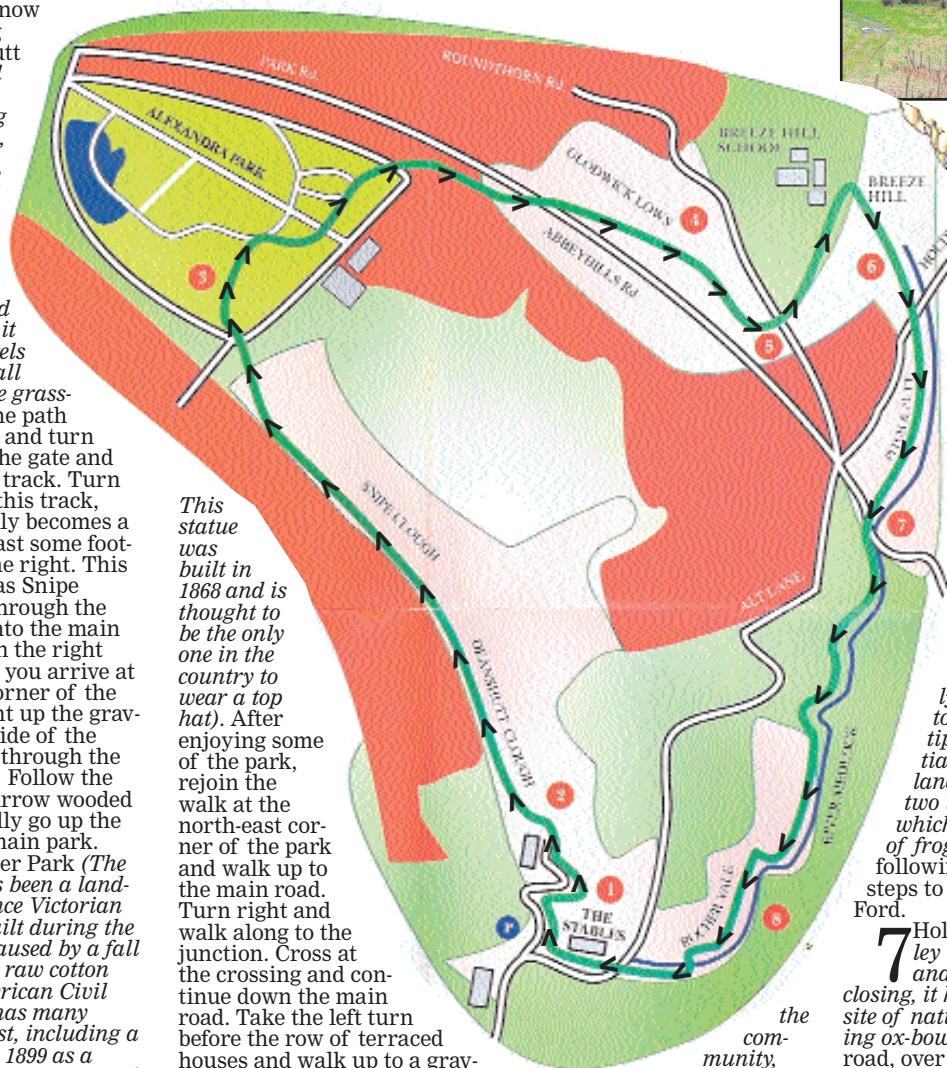
**1** Start at the Park Bridge Visitor Centre (Park Bridge was founded in 1784 by newlyweds Samuel Lees and Hannah Buckley who bought the old corn mill and converted it into a forge. An iron mill and cotton works were erected around it and thrived for nearly 200 years, exporting iron and steel around the world – including rivets for the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The Lees family created a whole community around the works, including cottages, pub, church and school. The firm closed down in 1963 but some of the buildings have found new uses). Turn right out of the stables courtyard and walk up the hill, then turn left onto Dingle Terrace. At the end, go through the squeeze stile and take the path up the slight incline.

This is our eighth feature in a series of articles aimed at encouraging people to get out and about, explore the borough and get healthy in the process. With the help of the Oldham Ramblers' Association, Oldham Council and Countryside Rangers we hope to reintroduce you to the places of beauty and interest on our own doorstep. This week we meander around the outskirts of the Medlock Valley and take in gems including Alexander Park and Glodwick Lows.

**2** You are now entering Deanshutt Clough (Named after the words 'Dean', meaning wooded pasture, and 'Shutt', which was used to describe strips of arable land. This site was once home to a railway line and a landfill. Now it is home to kestrels hunting for small mammals in the grass-land). Follow the path across the field and turn right through the gate and onto the gravel track. Turn left and follow this track, which eventually becomes a tarmac road, past some football fields on the right. This area is known as Snipe Clough. Walk through the gates and up onto the main road, staying on the right hand side until you arrive at the southern corner of the park. Turn right up the gravel road by the side of the park and enter through the gate on the left. Follow the path along a narrow wooded valley and finally go up the steps into the main park.

**3** Alexander Park (The park has been a landmark since Victorian times. It was built during the cotton famine caused by a fall in the export of raw cotton during the American Civil War. The park has many points of interest, including a pagoda built in 1899 as a meteorological observatory and a statue of Joseph Howarth, who was Oldham's town crier and bellman for 40 years.

**4** This is Glodwick Lows (An old mine and quarry reclaimed for



This statue was built in 1868 and is thought to be the only one in the country to wear a top hat). After enjoying some of the park, rejoin the walk at the north-east corner of the park and walk up to the main road. Turn right and walk along to the junction. Cross at the crossing and continue down the main road. Take the left turn before the row of terraced houses and walk up to a gravel path on the right. Head up.

**5** You are now at the old Manor House (Little is known of its past, but Lowside coal owner George Andrew resided here. It was built in three phases, starting from 1664). Carefully cross the road and follow the tarmac path on the right, slightly doubling back on yourself.

**6** This area is Breeze Hill (Once heavily populated by cotton mills, it became a tip and was then partially reclaimed and landscaped. There are two wetland areas which attract hundreds of frogs in spring). Keep following the path down steps to the bottom at Holts Ford.

**7** Holts Village (The valley was once a pitch and putt course. Since closing, it has returned to a site of natural beauty, including ox-bow lakes). Cross the road, over the former pitch and putt, through the stile and walk along the path to the main road. Cross carefully and turn left, heading

downhill. Turn right at the gate and stile and follow the gravel track. Walk through the gate and follow the sign-posted track.

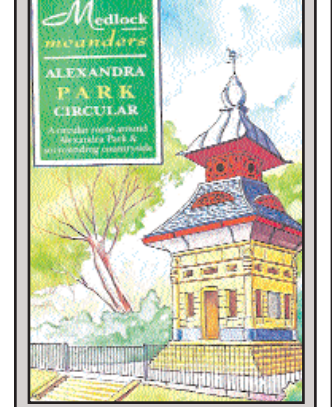
**8** The steep gorge is Rocher Vale (formed by a number of melting glaciers in the last ice age. In the valley are the remains of old coal mines that supplied the Park Bridge iron works). Follow the path through and climb the path up to the bridge and cross over it. Turn right and follow the road around to the ruins, cross over the bridge, and walk through the ruins back up to the stables.



path that leads across the lows to the easterly corner and come down to the road.

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

Next week: Don't miss our guide to a great circular and scenic Oldham

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