

Midhopestone Trough Walk

Water, Walls and Walks in the Sheffield Landscape



Water plays a significant part in the Lakeland area of Sheffield, most obviously in the rivers and reservoirs which abound here. Less apparent are other water features such as water mills, wells, troughs and drinking fountains; all have fascinating stories to tell. Most of the mills driven by water power, which existed in this area, were submerged when the large supply reservoirs were built. However, remains of some ruins can still be found along the length of the river Loxley. Many more functioning water troughs still exist however, and this leaflet gives some indication of the more interesting examples, with a guide to walking a local trail visiting some of these.

Walk Description

This short walk takes you on a route round the historic village of Midhopestones, presents two unusual troughs and an ancient sacred well as well as an easy walk alongside Underbank reservoir.

Length – 1.1 miles

Grade - Well marked paths, some stiles, steady ascents. Parts can be muddy and slippery

Start - Mortimer Road by 'Ye Olde Mustard Pot'. Park on roadside.

Grid Reference - SK 238 996

Maps – OL1 Dark Peak

Parking - Park on roadside

Public transport – Buses (service 26 and 26a Barnsley) stop at the crossroads on Manchester Road.

Public Toilets – none on the route

Directions

Walk down the road towards the bridge to see the river Don (also called the Little Don or Porter) flowing down a weir from Langsett and Midhope reservoirs. The weir diverted water for use in a corn mill which once stood near here. A date stone in the bridge parapet on the left shows it dates from 1788 when Mortimer Road was constructed as a toll road between Penistone to Grindleford.

Midhopestones village grew during the 17th and 18th centuries, although some buildings are much earlier. The village church of St. James was rebuilt in 1705 but the original structure originates from some time in the 14th century. A school was built in 1732 and the public house, the 'Club Inn' (known as the 'Midhopestones Arms' from 1992 and after 2002 as the 'Ye Olde Mustard Pot') was opened in the late 19th century in a converted late 18th century farmhouse.

Turn round to retrace your steps and go back up the hill keeping on the left side of the road. After the cottages you will find Potter's well. **Figure 1 & 1a**

After visiting Potter's wheel go back down and through the large metal gate and take the path by Underbank Reservoir.



Midhope Old Pottery was established in 1720 by William Gough, producing general household ware. Potters' Well was created at the same time from a natural spring and formed the only water supply in the village until 1919. The pottery closed in 1845 owing to more industrialised competition.

Follow the footpath alongside Underbank Reservoir. The reservoir was constructed on the Little Don River between 1897 and 1907. Apparently, Samuel Fox, the local industrialist, was opposed to the work on account of the devastating flood caused in 1864 when the embankment at Dale Dyke reservoir collapsed.



Carry on the path alongside the reservoir until the stone wall on your right turns a sharp corner. Just after this a track goes off back up to the right; turn up that path going through the gate to join Oaks Lane after 100m. At the lane turn right and go on to meet Mortimer Road.

Across the road you will see the Old Smithy (now a private dwelling). In front of the building is a 'dipping' trough so called because it would have been used by the blacksmith to dip and cool the metal as he worked it. A date stone in the corner of the house shows the initials possibly of blacksmiths who once worked here. **Figure 2**



Immediately below the Smithy a footpath on the left crosses a field. Take this path to come out over a stile onto Chapel Lane. Go up the lane.

At the bend below the chapel a farm track goes off to the right. Take this track and just after the end of the churchyard there is a footpath and metal gate on the right indicating St James Well. **Figure 3**

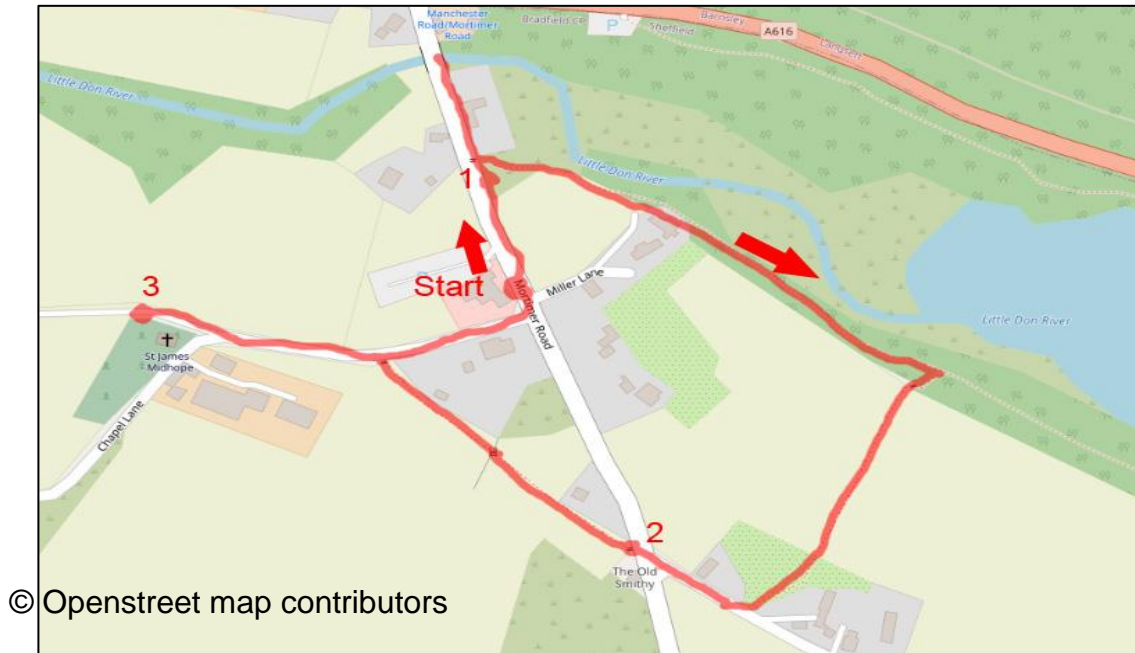


According to local historian, Joseph Kenworthy, the green pool, surrounded by iron railings and stone paving slabs, may be a holy well or sacred spring but its precise origins are unknown.

Please note the track is on private land and you should not go beyond the gated entrance to the well.

To return to the start of the walk go back along the track, turn left down Chapel Lane and on to Mortimer Road to reach 'Ye Olde Mustard Pot.'

Map



A History of Stone Troughs

Most troughs were made to provide animals with drinking water and are found both within and along the edges of fields. Some may be set into field walls so that they can serve stock in two fields and there will be a stone or metal divider down the middle of the wall. Troughs can be made of a variety of materials, carved from a solid block of stone or constructed from metal or concrete. Those found alongside roads and tracks are often fed by a natural stream or spring, although there may be a piped or culverted water supply.

In addition to roadside troughs being used to provide horses, donkeys and mules with a drink, in more recent times they would also have been used by traction engines and other steam road vehicles that needed to replenish their water supply. Householders might also have drawn water from a trough and relied on this source before the coming of mains water piped direct into the home.

Four troughs on Loxley Road are particularly interesting examples. The upper troughs have a stone canopy, which would have enabled only the householders to collect water, stopping animals' access to the water and avoiding contamination. The lower troughs were there to provide animals with a drink. Along the front of these lower troughs is a row of 'Kicking Stones' – there to prevent animal hooves from damaging the troughs.

