

A WALK ROUND POYNTON TAKING IN THE AREA'S MINING HERITAGE

Distance: 6 miles **Duration:** 2 hrs 45 mins **Height Gain:** 278 ft **Start Grid Ref** SJ 92363 83578

(Add between 1- 2 hours to the walk if visiting Anson Engine Museum – also, the walk can be shortened at point 19)

Features: Heritage Trail, Interesting Buildings, Museum, Canal, Great Views, Cafe, Pub, Toilets, Mostly Flat.

Description :

Poynton nestles in the foothills of the southern Pennines and today it is a thriving large village. Few visitors would realise that at one time Poynton had the largest coalfield in Cheshire, having 74 pits in its heyday. Coalmining ceased in 1935 and all pits were capped but there remain many interesting clues to this former industry including buildings and tracks. Apart from providing a glimpse of its recent industrial past, the walk passes by many attractive houses, covers a short stretch of the Macclesfield canal, and provides glorious views over Lyme Park and beyond. Refreshments and toilets are available along the route. If at all possible, find time to visit the Anson Engine Museum which is one of the country's specialist museums. It has a unique collection of over 250 gas and oil engines, many maintained in running order. It shows the development of the modern combustion engine and boasts a giant scale model of Poynton (c1900) showing the position of the coalfields. The museum is open Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays from Easter to the end of October.

The Nelson Pit Visitor Centre is close by and contains a comprehensive study of the history of the Poynton coalfields.

Access Info :

Start from the Civic Hall car park (free) off Park Lane in Poynton which is situated alongside the A523 between Macclesfield and Stockport.

SatNav: SK12 1RB

Alternatively, start from Middlewood Railway station situated on the Manchester Piccadilly to Buxton line. From either platform, walk up the steps and turn right along the Middlewood Way. Pass under Bridge 17 and immediately turn left up the steps to join the walk at point 16.

Additional info :

Extract from Bagshaw's Directory 1850

The Poynton and Worth Coal Mines, the property of, and worked by the Right Hon. George Warren Lord Vernon, are numerous, and spread over a compass of two miles. The coal is of good quality, and the mines are very prolific, having seams of coal varying from 2 to 7 feet in thickness. A railway about a mile in length, on a self acting incline, worked by a wire rope, conveys the coal to the Macclesfield branch railway, which is thence forwarded to Macclesfield and Stockport in very considerable quantities.

It is said that the mines were thus discovered :-"An old tenant of one of the farms was obliged to procure his water from a considerable distance, and frequently petitioned sir George Warren to sink a well for him; but his request not being attended to, he gave notice to quit the premises. This induced Sir George to pay more deference to the man's desire, and the well was begun. The spring lay at a great depth: but before they found the water, they discovered a large vein of superior coal."

Walk Steps

1 From the Civic Hall car park entrance, turn right and walk up Park Lane passing the individual shops, eateries and coffee shops.

The Shared Space design of Poynton's village centre is proving very successful in rejuvenating the centre as a safe and vibrant place to visit and shop. Fundamental changes to its road design have resulted in slower vehicle speeds, less accidents and higher retail footfall, whilst still allowing some 25k vehicles a day to pass through the Fountain Place junction.

Whilst the concept of Shared Space is modern and appropriate for a vibrant 21st century village centre, the scheme has also tried to respect and incorporate Poynton's industrial past into its design. Look out for the metal plates on the boundaries of some of the shop frontages on Park Lane which bear the names of some of the former Poynton pits. The four Gateway heritage themes at the boundaries of Shared Space were chosen by the public and represent Mining, Agriculture, Industry and Aviation.

2 At the mini roundabouts where Park lane joins London Road, notice St George's Church on the opposite side of the road. The church, in a fine gothic style, was built in 1858-89. The tower with spire was erected in 1885 by public subscription as a memorial to the late Lord Vernon. It contained a clock with chimes and 6 bells. Turn right and walk down London Road for 400 yards passing Poynton Sports Club.

3 Turn right down Woodside Drive.



4 Just before the entrance to the Kingswood Development turn left up the signed footpath. This is the start of Prince's Incline. This was significantly the longer of the two main inclines on the Poynton Collieries railway system (the other being Lady's Incline). Originally rope-worked, it was converted to locomotive haulage in 1889. They were built to take coal from the many pits in the area by road to either Stockport or to the Macclesfield Canal for onward transportation by narrowboat to Macclesfield and Bollington.

5 After about 600 yards continue ahead through the gate and cross straight over the road.



6 Notice this long building on the left. This was the office block with its elegant windows, and comprised the cashier's office, the pay window, stable block and workshop for the colliery estate.

7 Just past Towers Yard Farm standing on its own in a field is the original gunpowder storage house which was placed well away from people and their houses.

Continue ahead along the incline.



8 On the right hand side, notice the girders which support the raised incline. The tunnel underneath the incline by the rails supporting the embankment is locally known as "Yell Tunnel" and nowadays carries a public footpath. The old rails are not from colliery tramways, they are old tram rails from street tramways with electric trams for public transport.

9 When you see Davenport Golf Club on the right go through a gate. Do not take the right hand path but continue forward along the incline.

10 Cross the track and go through the kissing gate to continue up the hill with the golf course on your right..

11 After about 100 yards ignore the waymarked path on the left and continue ahead. This is Prince's Wood.



12 Continue forward passing through two more gates and shortly, you will see on the left hand side this information board giving details of the local colliery network here at the Albert Pit area in the 1840's. These were a mixture of rope-worked inclines and horse traction.

13 Shortly, you will reach Middlewood Road at Blue Bell Rise. Here, cross the road and turn left along the pavement.

14 After 200 yards, pass some riding stables and immediately turn right through a metal kissing gate opposite German Lodge and follow the path to tarmac path to a wooden stile.

15 Here, turn left along Prince Road crossing over Carleton Road/Hilton Road.

16 After 100 yards come to a bridge which passes over the Middlewood Way. This follows the line of the former Macclesfield, Bollington and Marple railway which was built in 1869 and had links to serve the collieries around Poynton. The line closed in 1970 and is now a walking, cycling and horseriding route covering a distance of 10 miles between Macclesfield and Marple.



17 Pass some houses on the left and go through the wooden gate. Continue ahead and observe the remains of these buildings on the right hand side. The large one was the winding and pumping engine house for Canal Pit. In the foreground are the remains of two concrete supports for the headgear.

18 On reaching the Macclesfield Canal turn right along the towpath. The Macclesfield Canal was opened in 1831 at a cost of £320,000. It was built to serve the mills, mines and quarries of the Marple, Poynton Bollington, Macclesfield and Congleton areas. It is over 26 miles in length and connects with the Peak Forest Canal in Marple and the Trent and Mersey Canal near Kidsgrove in Staffordshire.

(At this point you can shorten the walk by continuing along the canal until you reach Bailey's Trading Post at Poynton Marina – point 23)

You will shortly arrive at Bridge 14.

This shows the effect of colliery subsidence, the original roadway sunk by several feet and the parapet raised.



19 If continuing on the main walk pass under the bridge and walk up the steps on the right to go over the bridge and then immediately turn right over the stile and along a signposted path to walk beneath the electricity pylons. Cross the stile and walk across the field to a stile and bear left towards a further stile. At this stile turn sharp right and follow the line of trees. As you walk along the path there are beautiful views across Lyme Park where *Pride and Prejudice*, starring Colin Firth, was filmed several years ago.



20 On the right hand side is this former gas holder. This was originally sited at gas works near Poynton Station but was later moved here and used as a water tower serving Higher Poynton. The cast iron makers' plates of 1877 are visible on the side. Just past this on the left is a stile which you climb over and turn right to walk along the fence. In 60 yards turn right and walk diagonally right with the barns of Hilltop Farm on your left. At the tarmac path turn right and walk down the hill.



21 In 100 yards you arrive at Hilltop Cottage on your left. This was a former winding engine house for the Reform Pit nearby. The house was once known as Longchimney after the "Long Chimney" which is still evident on the north side.

22 Pass through a stile and continue down the hill to rejoin the Macclesfield Canal. Turn right to walk over the bridge with the canal on your right.

23 You will arrive at Bailey's Trading Post where light refreshments can be taken. From here, continue along the canal for about 50 yards. Here you will see the Council map and eateries notice board.



24 Turn left through this opening. Walk down through the car park and then downhill for about 100 yards.

25 You now arrive at Nelson Pit Visitor Centre where free public toilets can be found. The centre was built on the site of a former colliery and contains a comprehensive study of the history of the Poynton Collieries. Admission is free. The sculpture has the names of all 74 pits which were once worked in the area. From the entrance to the car park turn right, passing the Boar's Head pub on your left and walk down Anson Road.



26 Pass the Household Waste Recycling Centre on the right hand side and continue along the road for about a further 400 yards until you come to the entrance to the Anson Engine Museum. Built on the site of the old Anson Colliery, the museum houses a unique collection of over 250 gas and oil engines, many maintained in running order. The museum also boasts a giant scale model of Poynton (c1900) depicting the local colliery network at that time. The museum is open between Easter and the end of October. After visiting the museum, return to the entrance and turn right to continue walking down Anson Road to its junction with Middlewood Road.

27 Cross the road and turn left down Middlewood Road to view the old whitewashed Miners' cottages on the left.



28 These cottages were built in 1815 by the colliery owners, the Warren Bulkeleys, to house miners and their families. They were built with solid brick walls, 9" thick, with stone slate roofs. A babbling brook runs through the front gardens which the miners used for growing vegetables and watering their livestock. They are known as Petre Bank Cottages from "Pear Tree Bank" in reference to a sand bank which lay behind the cottages.

29 Continue down Middlewood Road and pass the remaining buildings at the site of the former Lady Pit. The first one was the Capstan House whereas the Old Pump House was the winding engine house for the pit but latterly, it contained pumping equipment for draining several other local mines.



30 At the road junction, turn right up Park Lane and immediately turn right up Charlecote Road passing the entrance to Woburn Court on the left and continue for a further fifty yards.



31 Here, turn left through this wooden gate and walk the length of Lady's Incline. This was the course of the railway to Lord and Lady Pits.



32 The brickwork on the path indicates the location of the wheel pit at the top of the rope-worked incline. This was a self-acting incline with the weight of loaded bricks running down the incline hauling up returning empties. It was converted to locomotive operation in 1882.

33 At the end of the incline turn left along Woodside Drive and when reaching London Road, turn left and walk back to the junction with Park Lane. Turn left and walk back along Park Lane to reach the Civic Hall car park.

For further reading and detailed information about Poynton's Coalmining history refer to "Poynton A Coalmining Village" by W H Shercliff, D A Kitching and J M Ryan available both online and in book form.



This walk has been produced by Poynton Town Council as part of the "Welcome to Poynton" initiative aimed at increasing visitor numbers and providing local points of interest to Poynton residents.

For more information visit www.poyntontowncouncil.gov.uk

