

Low Moor Walks – Number 2



Wesley Place Wesleyan Methodist Church and Sunday School pictured in 1905 showing the graveyard, which is all that now survives

Park House and Raw Nook

Revised edition 2016

Scott's School – Chapel House – Park House Road – golf course – railway – Raw Nook Heathland – Toad Holes – Furnace Road – railway bridge – Railway Terrace – Terry Road – Woodrow Drive – Caldene Avenue – Sal Royd Road – Wesley Place graveyard – First Street – Main Street – Holy Trinity churchyard.

Starting point: War memorial at the junction of Cleckheaton Road, Common Road and Netherlands Avenue BD12 0TW
Buses: 268 goes down Cleckheaton Road. Or 363, 686, 687 and 688 and walk down Netherlands Avenue from Huddersfield Road.

Parking : Common Road

Distance: 3.25 miles. Allow around 1 hour 40 minutes

Surface: May be muddy in places. Stiles: 1 plus some gap stiles

From the war memorial (cenotaph) cross Common Road and then Cleckheaton Road by the zebra crossing. Walk up the road and have a look at the front of Old School Mews through the gateway. The former school was built in 1814 by the Low Moor Company and eventually became Low Moor Church School. However everyone who attended in modern times knew it as "Scott's School", being the nickname it gained from John and Joseph Scott – father and son – who were headmasters from 1838 to 1900.

Walk a little further up the road then turn right and follow the unmade road behind the school. At the bottom end of the school high up on the gable you will see the plaque commemorating the erection of the school by the Low Moor Company in 1814.

Continue down the road, noticing the old cottages, Chapel House Buildings, as you pass. **Turn left at the bottom** and have a look at the Chapel House Inn. It was erected in the 17th century and for a while served as the courthouse for the Manor of Royds Hall.

On the opposite side of the road is Holy Trinity Church (Church of England). The original building was erected in 1606 at the instigation of the Rookes family of Royds Hall and the Richardson family of Bierley Hall. However substantial alterations were made to it in the 19th century. For many years it served as a "chapel of ease" for Bradford Parish Church and was known as "Wibsey Chapel" – Low Moor being known in full as "Wibsey Low Moor". This is where our walk eventually finishes so there is more information about the church later.

Carry on walking along Park House Road. Just after the church you will pass Low Moor CE Primary School and then Brayshaw Fold, a small row of cottages, situated at a right angle to the road. These are some of the oldest houses in the area and were once part of a larger group.

The Wesley estate on your left was built in the 1960s. The development on your right is more recent and all the roads are named after notable professional cricketers. This no doubt was in recognition of the fact that the houses were built on the former ground of the Holy Trinity Cricket Club.

When you reach Park House Crescent on your left continue straight forward. On your left you will find a pleasant area of water still known locally as "Rigby's dam". Rigby's was a manufacturer of high quality wire. In 1904 they took over the existing Low Moor firm of James Bateman on this site. The Bateman family had run their business here since the late 1700s and there are a number of memorial plaques commemorating the family in Holy Trinity Church. Today the site is sub-divided into smaller industrial units.

As you leave the industrial area there are two houses on your right, the nearest is modern but the other, Park House, has a date stone (not visible from here) of 1635. **Continue with these houses to your right.** To your left are some houses in a walled garden. The house with mullion windows just

visible to the rear of the garden is the original Upper Park House re-built in 1635.

With the cricket field on your right the road becomes a track. Do not enter the golf course ahead but follow the path to the right over raised posts. Continue along this track to emerge through a gate into a field. Follow the main path. Do not go across the footbridge but keep right and follow the footpath through a gate way until you reach a pond.

You are now in one of the most important sites for wildlife in the district. It is known as the Raw Nook Heathland and occupies thirteen acres which was the former site of the engine sheds and railway sidings of Low Moor Station. Sixty-eight species of flora have been identified along with fifteen types of butterfly, numerous birds, foxes and nocturnal mammals. More information about the site can be found on the Bradford Council website www.bradford.gov.uk. Go to "W" for walks then select the first option "Walking (Sport and activities)", now select "Easy accessible countryside sites" and Railway Terrace Walk is the bottom option.

You now have a number of choices –

- 1) Spend a short time wandering round the heathland site and return to the footbridge.
- 2) Perhaps return to the site at a later date but now retrace your steps to the footbridge.
- 3) Continue through the woodland and then through the field and gates to emerge at Railway Terrace. Then re-join the walk at ** below.

For options (1) and (2) retrace your steps and cross the footbridge over the railway line. At the other side you will see to your left a deserted car park. This served the "Transperience" transport museum in the 1990s. Unfortunately, the museum was not well supported and had to close.

Turn right when you have crossed the bridge and immediately cross the service road at the pedestrian walkway. Go down the path that leads behind N G Bailey's unit. There is a dam behind the trees on your left.

Go down the steps to the point where there is a sign to your right marked "footpath" This area is called Toad Holes and was made into a nature reserve in the 1980s. There are dams to both sides of the path. You may want to explore, but be careful. The paths can be slippery and there is deep water

Return to the main path. This section is often overgrown and passes seats constructed in the 1980s. **You emerge onto a stony track.** The area beyond it was the site of the Bierley Iron Works in the early 19th century. **Turn right and follow the track keeping to the right. You will emerge into Furnace Road through a narrow opening at the side of a barrier. Continue forward.** The large old building standing back through a gateway on your right was the Great Northern Railways goods shed.

Continue until you reach the main road (Cleckheaton Road). In 1916 there was a huge munitions explosion in Low Moor and there is a separate walk, No 5, which tells you all about it. The walk starts from Victoria Park which is across the road and turn left.

To continue this walk, cross the road and turn right. The houses to your left are known as Gas Works Yard and not surprisingly a gasholder used to stand near here. It was wrecked in the 1916 explosion. The road crosses the railway line by means of a bridge but photographs exist of a level crossing in much earlier days. The railway came to Low Moor in 1848 and became a notable junction where the Low Moor Company had private sidings. The station closed in 1965. A new station is due to open in 2017.

From the bridge you can see the site of the munitions works (behind the warehouses) where in 1916 an explosion of picric acid in the munitions works resulted in the greatest loss of life in the history of Low Moor. 40 people were killed, many were injured and there was widespread property damage.

The area further up New Works Road was the site of the extension of Low Moor Iron Works commenced in the 1830s and was known as the New Beggin. Today a lot of the land is occupied by BASF (formerly Ciba and before that Allied Colloids) the largest employer in the district.

Turn left on New Works Road and make a short diversion just beyond the terraces on your right, to view the single storey cottages typical of the early houses erected by the iron works for its workers. **Retrace your steps and re-cross Cleckheaton Road. Walk on Lockwood Street between the George and the Black Horse public houses.** At the end you will come to a row of houses called Railway Terrace which was formerly known as Locomotive Terrace. The main entrance to the Raw Nook Heathland is on your right.

*** If you took option (3) at the pond you have now re-joined the walk.*

At the end of the cobbles turn left into the recreation field and follow the hedge to a gap at the end of a cul de sac. Go right here and after the bungalow turn left across a turning area. You are now in Terry Road. The two old houses in front of you are Lower Park House Farm and Prospect House. The latter was once known as Lower Park House and was a meeting place for Methodists in the late 18th century, prior to the building of Wesley Place Chapel.

Turn right and follow the path round crossing straight over Woodrow Drive. Go up a snicket and emerge in Caldene Avenue. Turn left and left again after no 103 into Sal Royd Road. Follow this road, admiring the substantially built properties on your right.

At the far end notice Laburnum Cottage (No 5) which has a date stone of 1741 above its front door. From the mid to late 1800s Joseph Musgrave Woodcock, the blast furnace manager at the Low Moor Company lived here although it was then called Busey Cottages. His father Thomas Woodcock was the architect who designed the first blast furnaces at the works.

Turn right up the unmade road immediately after Laburnum Cottage. Notice the brick rear walls of the terrace of houses built by local firm Birkby's, which face onto Cleckheaton Road. Stone fronts and brick rears were not uncommon in the area.

You emerge into Chapel Road opposite a graveyard. It is now owned by Bradford Council but formerly served Wesley Place Methodist Church which stood on the site of the modern houses. The first church was erected in 1808 and replaced in 1905 by a striking Italianate building with a copper dome. It was demolished in 1959. You can see a photograph of this area in 1905 at the head of this leaflet. The graves contain a wealth of information for local and family historians and the inscription details were recorded in the 1920s by Arthur Blackburn and are available on www.sblha.com along with details of the burial registers. A Friends of Wesley Place Graveyard group has recently been formed.

You now have another choice. To end the walk at this point, turn left and then at Cleckheaton Road turn right and continue for about a quarter of a mile and you will be back at the war memorial.

Alternatively cut through the graveyard, turn right on First Street and first left into Main Street. You may be surprised at the name of this street but in days past it was a hive of activity. The end houses on your right with their cornerwise doors were formerly thriving shops and you can still see evidence of the shop windows.

At the top of Main Street take the path across the playing fields and continue straight forward into Holy Trinity churchyard. Some of the graves here date from the 17th century. As with Wesley Place details of the memorial inscriptions can be found on www.sblha.com. Photographs of the memorials are on <http://gravestonephotos.com/>. Part of the graveyard has been designated a nature reserve and has won awards.

Judy North, who gave her name to Judy Woods (between Wyke and Woodside), is buried in the graveyard. She married three times and two of her husbands are also buried here. Whilst the registers record her burial they unfortunately do not tell us where!

The interior of the church contains many memorial plaques relating to notable local families, especially the Rookes of Royds Hall. The church is normally locked when not in use but access may be arranged through the wardens.

When you have completed your visit turn left and follow Park House Road back to the war memorial.

You can download further copies of this leaflet from our website www.lmlhg.org.uk which also provides links to the late John Nicoll's photographs of Low Moor.

You may also be interested in our South Bradford Local History Alliance website www.sblha.com which contains parish and other local records and links to related websites.

Low Moor Local History Group meets on the first Friday of each month (except August) at 2.30pm at Aldersgate Methodist Church which is opposite the war memorial which you have passed on this walk. Visitors and new members are welcome.

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Thanks to the late John Nicoll & members of Low Moor Local History Group

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