

Roots and Routes Walk 1.

Ovenden Way to Dean Clough via Old Lane

As you leave OSCA turn right on to Cousin Lane and cross the road. By St Malachy's Church, turn left and walk down Nursery Lane then turn right on Vegal Crescent designed and built by Laura Annie Willson. Laura Annie Willson was an English engineer and the first female member of the Federation of House Builders. After the war she was a founder member of the Women's Engineering Society and decided something needed to be done about the poor housing that was available for working people, so she designed and built her own houses. Laurel Crescent and Vegal Avenue being 2 of her housing projects. When you reach the end, turn left and continue walking down Ovenden Way. One of Ovenden Way's most famous residents was Champion Jack Dupree. William Thomas "Champion Jack" Dupree was a New Orleans Blues and Boogie-woogie pianist and singer whose nickname was derived from his early career as a boxer. He began a life of travelling, living in Chicago and Indianapolis and Detroit where he worked as a cook. The boxer Joe Louis encouraged him to become a boxer and he fought 107 bouts, winning Golden Gloves and earning the nickname Champion Jack. He moved to Europe in 1960, living in Switzerland, Denmark, Germany and Sweden before coming to England. In the 1970s, he lived at Ovenden Way.

At the bottom of Ovenden Way, turn left and you are at Bank Top. Continue walking and cross the road and walk towards the start of Old Lane. Keep your look out as it is a sharp right turn just before a row of shops. As you walk down Old Lane and go over the railway bridge, heading towards the crossroads further on, you need to look down to your right and try to imagine that there once stood Ovenden Railway Station.

Ovenden railway station was on the Halifax and Ovenden Junction Railway and closed in 1955. Because of the local area at Ovenden the rail companies didn't think it was important to have a nice station, so it was built of timber although there is still the station house there.

Just along the line from Ovenden Station was Lee Bank Tunnel. Lee Bank Tunnel was a railway tunnel on the Halifax to Queensbury section of the Queensbury lines south of Ovenden. It was 267 yards (244 m) long and was very close to Woodside Viaduct. Woodside Viaduct was a railway bridge that had six arches and was situated between Woodside (Old Lane) Tunnel and Lee Bank Tunnel. The bridge carried the Queensbury to Halifax section of the Queensbury lines. The viaduct was demolished to make room for the dual carriageway on the A629 road, the main road between Halifax and Keighley. Woodside (Old Lane) Tunnel, the southern portal of Lee Bank tunnel was infilled when the main Keighley road was doubled to a dual carriageway, the northern portal was bricked up.

Continue past the Halifax Boxing Sports and Fitness Club on your right and you will come to a crossroads, continue forward. Further on, to the left is the site of the Old Lane Inn. Old Lane Inn opened in 1892 and closed in 1962 then reopened in 1982 as 'Dicky Mints' but closed soon after. It was demolished in 2011. As you continue, on the left there is Woodfield Cottage, early home to John Mackintosh, the Toffee King. Although he was born in the town of Dukinfield, Cheshire in 1868, his Mum and Dad moved to Halifax shortly after John was born, where he became World famous for creating Mackintosh's Toffees with his wife Violet. Further on and to the right, in the valley there are the remnants of Akroyd Mill. In 1827 James Akroyd, Father of Colonel Edward Akroyd, built the first Jacquard looms in Britain. This building is listed because it is the oldest and largest surviving example of a multi-storey, steam-powered, iron-framed textile mill in the important textile centre of Halifax, it is probably also the best preserved example for its date in Yorkshire. The Mill was a steam-powered worsted mill built by James Akroyd in 1825. It was acquired by the Rawson family in 1836. On Saturday 21st January 1905 there was a fire which caused damage estimated at £8,000. At the side of the mill runs Hebble brook and there is still the ghost of the railway system present.

As we get close to the end of the trail you have two choices

Choice 1.

Continue down towards Dean Clough and end the trail in Halifax by seeing the site of North Bridge railway station.

North Bridge railway station, also known as Halifax North Bridge, served on the Halifax and Ovenden Junction Railway. North Bridge Leisure Centre now occupies the space where it once stood. The only real remnant of the station is the Iron Foot Bridge and in the distance, Old Lane Tunnel.

Choice 2.

Alternatively, continue down Old Lane, on the right you will come to Atlas Garage. To its side is an old iron rail bridge. Cross this and you will come to the road which leads to the Halifax Recycling Centre. Here you can walk left towards the end of this road and then turn right and go up Keighley Road towards Ovenden Way where you can follow the route back to OSCA.