

# Colne Valley Cloth Trail - Milnsbridge

## About the Colne Valley Cloth Trail - Milnsbridge

The village of Milnsbridge was once a thriving textile area, producing world renowned fancy woollen textiles. By the 1920's and 1930's approximately 13 woollen mills were located here, mainly alongside the River Colne and Huddersfield Narrow Canal, together with associated trades such as dyeworks, ironworks and chemical works. The textile industry employed thousands of workers.

The development of the textile industry, from the early days of cloth produced in the home to the industrialised mills, changed working people's lives. This did not come without resistance and Milnsbridge played its part in the Luddite riots and rebellion.

Whilst many mills have since been demolished there remain some fine examples. The trail takes you to some of the remaining sites and along the canal.

This is a linear walk of approximately 2 miles in length and finishes at Ramsden Mill Lane. A short walk up Ramsden Mill Lane takes you to Britannia Road.

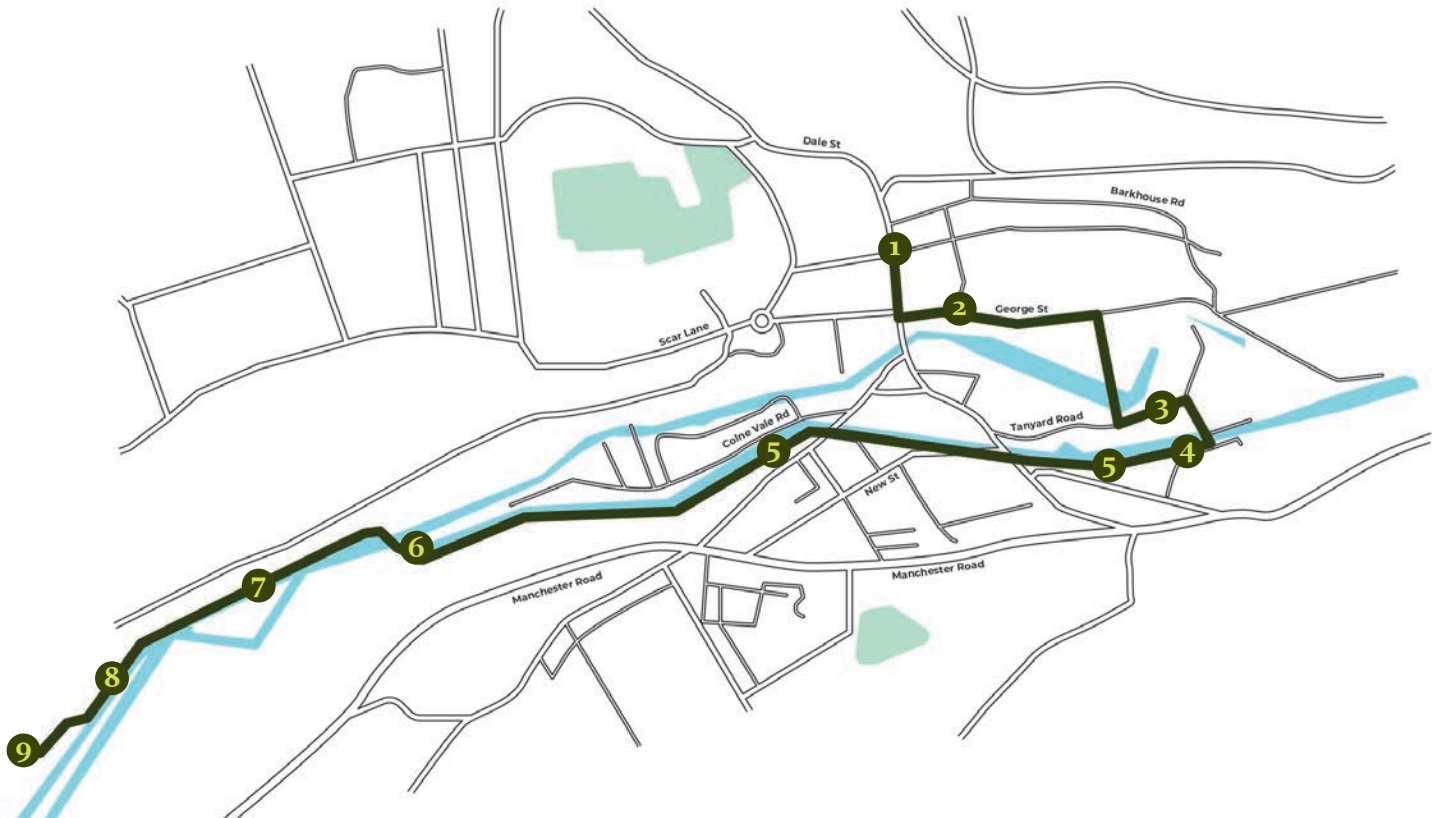
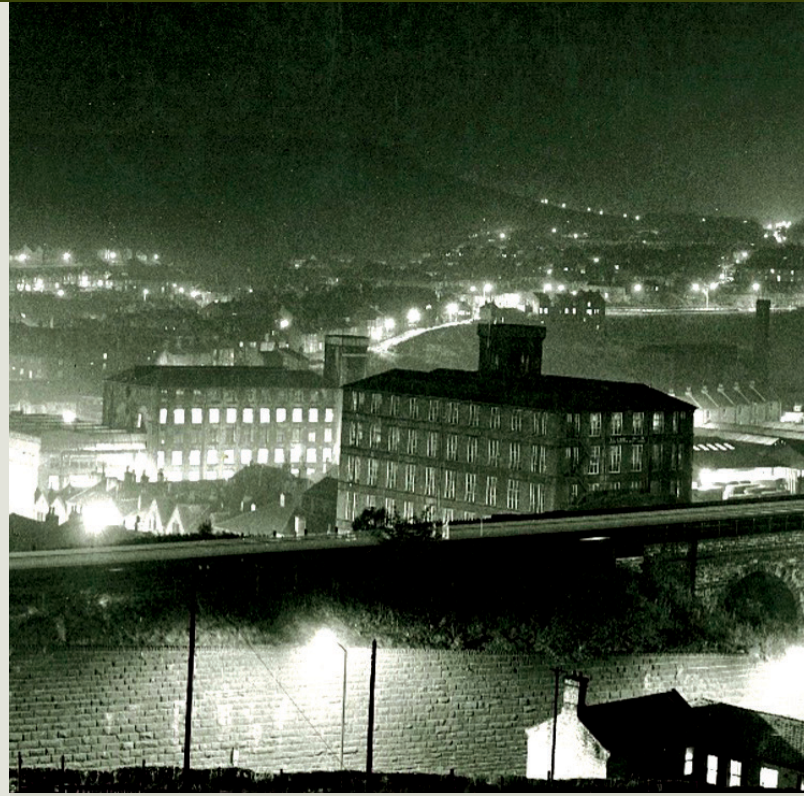
*Images:* Cover photograph Milnsbridge by Night, Commercial Mills and Milnsbridge House courtesy of Huddersfield Local Studies Library. Remaining photographs Julie Mahoney

*Text:* Julie Mahoney

## Information

For more information about Discover Huddersfield or to learn more about the project and how to get involved, please get in touch through the following media:

[www.discoverhuddersfield.com](http://www.discoverhuddersfield.com) Email: [info@discoverhuddersfield.com](mailto:info@discoverhuddersfield.com)



Discover Huddersfield offers new ways to experience this amazing Yorkshire town, through guided walks, talks and trails. See Huddersfield at its very best: grand listed buildings and small independent shops; a place for radicals from the Luddites to the Sex Pistols; birthplace of Rugby League; a town rich in creativity, stories, heritage and the odd ghostly encounter.



**1 Commercial Mill - Corner of Market Street and Savile Street**

Occupied by various tenants until acquired by C & J Hirst & Sons Ltd in the early 1900's. C & J Hirst was one of the oldest textile manufacturers in the Colne Valley. Their main premises were at Sunnybank Mills, Dale Street, Longwood, and as business prospered, they expanded to other premises here and in Longwood. The company was wound up in 1982, and the mill converted into apartments. In celebration of Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee 2002 a fine clock was attached to the corner of the building.



**2 Milnsbridge House - corner of George Street and Dowker Street**

This important grade 2\* listed building no longer resembles the elegant 18th century mansion with its pleasure grounds, lakes and orchards. It was the home of Joseph Radcliffe who, as a JP, interrogated the Luddites following the disturbances of 1811 - 1812, for which he was awarded a Baronetcy. A blue plaque commemorates these events. Around it grew the mills and workers housing, particularly from the mid 19th.

It was also the home of Mr Joseph Armitage founder of Armitage Bros., owner of three mills in Milnsbridge. It remained in the Armitage family until 1919.



**3 Union Mill Tanyard Road**

Built by E & G Dyson Bros, the date on the building is 1861. The mills were put up for sale in 1883 and acquired by John Crowther and Sons. A second mill building is located behind on the other side of the canal.

Here, on 24 June 1931, (in conjunction with Prices Tailors Ltd, Leeds) a new "Sheep to Suit" World Record was achieved of 2 hrs 9 mins and 46 secs. The 12 sheep were sheared in 10 minutes, 94 people were engaged in making the cloth and 40 people from Prices Tailors made the suit. Mr Stoner Crowther took all 1530 of his employees on a day trip to Blackpool to celebrate.



**4 Burdett Mill Factory Lane**

This grade 2 listed building is the only surviving mill of the 3 established by Mr Joseph Armitage of Armitage Bros, and is one of the oldest mills in the valley. A commemoration plaque can be seen on the building marking the laying of the first stone on 20th April 1838, by Sir Francis Burdett Bart MP.

Armitage Bros were in existence for over 100 years, the firm went out of business in the 1930's and the mill then became part of John Crowther & Sons (Milnsbridge) Ltd.

The Crowther family owned numerous mills throughout the Colne Valley and not only became its biggest employer but also one of the

biggest textile employers in Europe. In Milnsbridge the site expanded to cover an area of 18 acres. By the 1990's many of these mills had become disused.

A regeneration scheme in the 1990's named 'Crowther Village' converted Burdett Mill and Union Mill into apartments. Other mills were demolished and replaced by new housing.

**5 Canal**

Leave Burdett Mill along the canal towpath by Lock 8E. The trail now takes you along the canal towpath. On the right-hand side housing now occupies the former Elm Ing Mills site.

After passing under the 2nd road bridge, on the opposite side of the canal are modern industrial units, sited off Colne Vale Road which sits between the canal and the river.

Here were chemical and dyeworks, in particular Colne Vale Dyeworks and Leitch & Co Ltd. Colne Vale Dyeworks founded in 1858 was one of the first to produce the dye, magenta. Leitch & Co Ltd founded in 1890 principally manufactured aniline dyes and explosives and were the first in Britain to manufacture TNT (explosive). In between the chemical works and dyeworks sat Colne Vale Woollen Mill now an industrial business park.



**6 Stanley Mill**

By the aqueduct you can see the back of Stanley Mills and its Italianate chimney, which Eli Fielding and Ben Whitwam built on Britannia Road c1870. The company became Ben Whitwam & Co fancy woollen and worsted weavers. Through the trees on the right-hand side of Stanley Mill are Scarbottom Mills and Britannia Mills. Britannia Mills was one of only two cotton mills in Milnsbridge.

**7 Holme Mill**

These canalside buildings, previously occupied by Robert Taylor & Co

Shoddy & Mungo', were bought by John Lockwood & Sons in 1903 as an addition to Scarbottom Mill, to house his expanding business. In 1934 a turbine was installed and by 1935 both mills were electrically driven. The company remained in business until 1979. Now the site is Holme Mills Industrial Park.



**8 Ramsden Mill Between Lock No 13E and 14E.**

Ramsden Mill was built on the side of the river Colne to harness its power, originally replacing a fulling and scribbling mill occupied by the Ramsden family in the C18th. Expansion and steam power brought a large chimney which towered over the site and can still be seen today. It needed a brick channel to funnel the steam engine fumes. Taylor & Livesey occupied the mill around 1879 until 1988 when the mills finally ceased production. The site is now occupied by Trojan Plastics Ltd, with modern industrial buildings, amongst some of the older mill buildings.

Cross over the bridge (no.37) by lock 14E and follow the footpath



**9 Loomshop Ramsden Mill Lane**

A small weaving factory built c1840, this grade 2 listed building is an important surviving example of combined dwelling and workshop. Ground floor used for storage, 1st floor dwelling and two top floors for weaving. It represents a transitional stage in the development from weaver's cottages to the mill. Probably built by the Ramsden family the owners of Ramsden Mill.