

Walk: APD5

Anson Engine Museum, Poynton's Pits and the Macclesfield Canal

Starting Point: Nelson Pit Visitor Centre in Lyme Road, Higher Poynton. Map reference SJ940835

How to get there: From the centre of Poynton, follow Park Lane for almost a mile; keep left at the first major fork then fork right up Anson Road. Go over the crossroads by the Boar's Head and turn left into the car park – if the lower one is full, use the much larger higher one.

Map: OS Explorer 268 – Wilmslow, Macclesfield & Congleton

Length: 2½ miles or 3 miles

Grade: Easy

Duration: One to two hours, plus visit to museum

The Nelson Pit Visitor Centre is normally open daily, but you can phone 01625 573998 to be certain. It opened in March 1999 and has a considerable number of displays. Here, you can quickly learn about the history of Poynton and surroundings. An even more important part of this walk is the Anson Engine Museum with its superb collection of memorabilia and mining machinery, including well over 100 oil and gas engines.

Full details, including opening times and special events, can be obtained from the museum website, www.enginemuseum.org or by phoning 01625 874426. Be sure to phone before your visit.

From the car park, walk downhill towards the crossroads and then carry on down Anson Road, first passing the waste disposal site and then a bungalow called 'The Anson'. Shortly after this, turn right along the wide track leading to the museum (1). After about 200m you reach the main entrance.

The museum is on the site of the Anson Colliery. In 1856, it yielded 51,000 tons of coal – just look at the size of the spoil tips as evidence of the productivity of this pit! At its peak, the total output for Poynton was over a quarter of a million tons of coal per year. By the early 1920s, this had fallen to around 100,000 tons and the last pit was closed in 1935.



Inside the Anson Museum

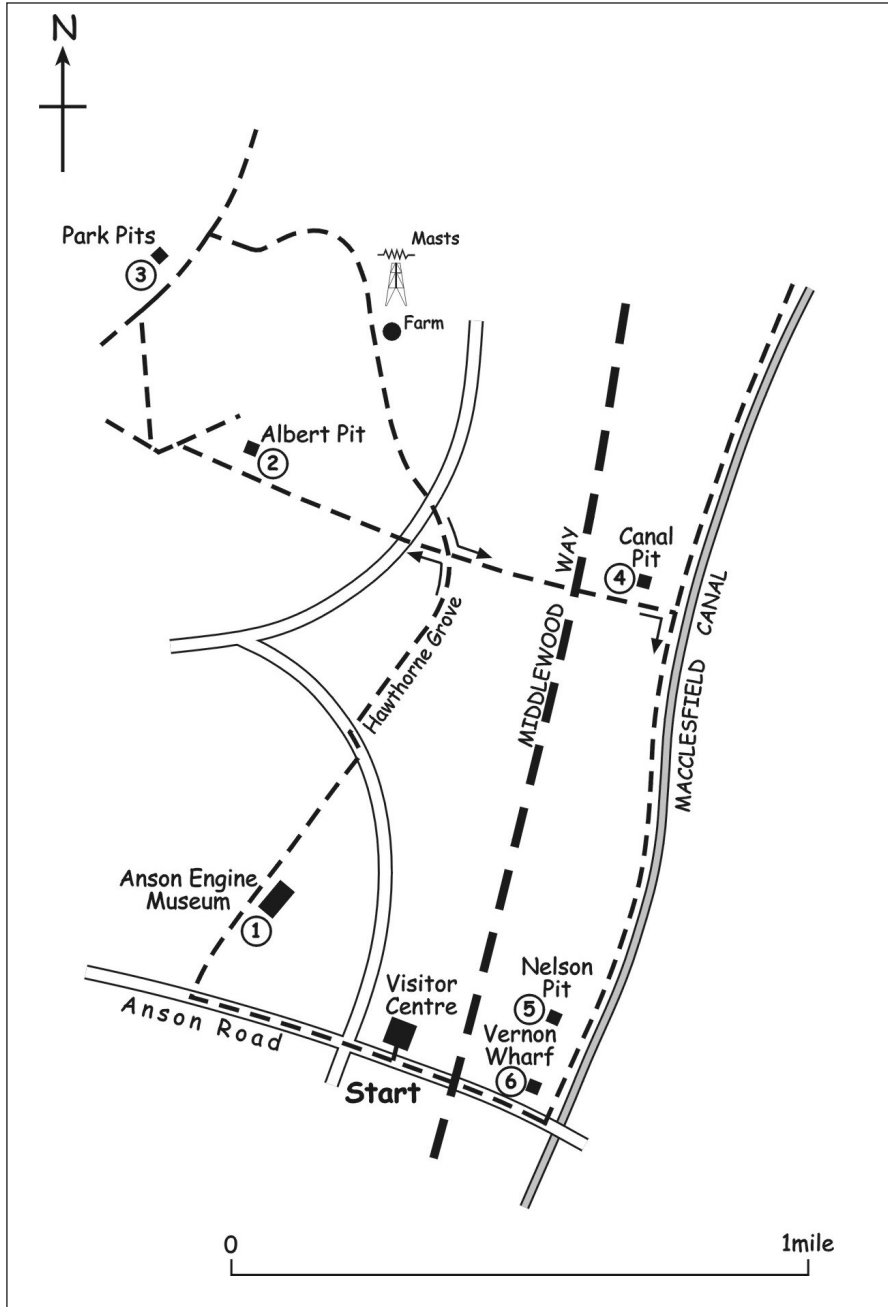
Walk out of the museum grounds and turn right along the track, away from Anson Road – conifers on the right, golf course on the left. At the road, turn left for a few metres then cross the road to Hawthorne Grove. At the end of this lane, turn left and continue for 150m. Cross a tarmac road to where there is a choice of footpaths. Take the left-hand one, the route of a railway that, interestingly, was always worked by horses.

After a little more than a quarter of a mile, cross a metal stile and reach a notice board describing the area; this is near to the Park Incline and the site of the Albert Pit (2). Loaded trucks were hauled up to here from Park Pits by a stationary steam engine. Turn right here, pass a pool on your left and walk through the wood and then follow the approximate route of an old railway. Cross three stiles and, after the third, go over a crosspaths and continue ahead. A few metres later, pass a pool on the right that was a reservoir for Park Pits. Then, cross a stile in the fence and continue in roughly the same direction.

Cross a main track to continue alongside a hedge and the remains of an embanked, but impassable, trackway. Cross a stile at the crooked corner in this field and continue alongside a fence. The levelled site of Park Pits (3) is on your left.

This was a very productive area: up to 180,000 tons of coal a year were mined at Park Pits from depths of up to 1000 feet (300m).

Adlington, Poynton & Disley



Continue through a plantation to a further fence and turn right. Head uphill, veering slightly away from the fence and head towards the communication masts. From here, follow the wide track that curves to the right to pass a house, then heads downhill to the road.

Cross the road, go through a stile with a stable on your right and then follow an elevated tarmac path. Turn left along Prince Road, continue over the crossroads with Carleton Road and cross a bridge over the Middlewood Way.

Continue to the Macclesfield Canal, which opened almost 40 years before the railway in 1831. On the skyline, you should be able to see Lyme Cage, the folly in Lyme Park. As you turn right onto the towpath, you are near the remains of Canal Pit (4).

This pit that was never very productive, yielding only 7,691 tons of coal in 1879 and a meagre 1,543 tons in 1888. Its main purpose was to pump water from the various workings and it was known as 'Redlegs' because of its red pump rods which waved above the shaft when it was in operation. Nelson Pit was at location (5) and its coal was transported by canal to the mills of Bollington and Macclesfield; it produced 67,500 tons of coal in 1856.

Continue along the canal, passing under bridge number 14 and alongside the marina, often packed with boats of all shapes and sizes. Soon, cross a tiny hump-backed bridge over a spur from the canal: this is Vernon Wharf (6), where canal boats were loaded with coal from the pits.

A rope-hauled tramway carried coal tubs from Anson Pit up to this wharf, which is why the pavement is so wide on the bridge over the Middlewood Way that you will soon be able to inspect. Remember to look at the stonework on the bridge parapet and you will see the grooves cut by the haulage rope.

Before leaving the canal towpath, pass the small canalside shop (ice creams here) and turn right at the bridge over the Way, then down Lyme Road to return to the car park and visitor centre. More substantial refreshments are available just minutes away at the Boar's Head, on the crossroads, and 'The Coffee Tavern' just to the left of the pub. Note that there is another café of the same name just a mile or so away at Pott Shrigley!