

DELPH

DELPH STATION

Delph station was initially relatively small with only a couple of sidings. However, with growth in traffic the station was redeveloped in the early 1880s with larger passenger accommodation, goods shed, sidings and coal drops.

The line was extended in the 1880s for a short period with a train running from Delph hauled by a contractor's engine to take material up the Castleshaw Valley to build the reservoirs.

Carrying freight was an important service and the line had a number of sidings along the route serving a quarry and a number of mills.



Delph Station in 1870s with Bailey Mill in background



1880s

The terminus at Delph had a siding into the adjacent Bailey Mill as well as coal drops to receive coal and material for the local mills. It also carried many of the finished goods.



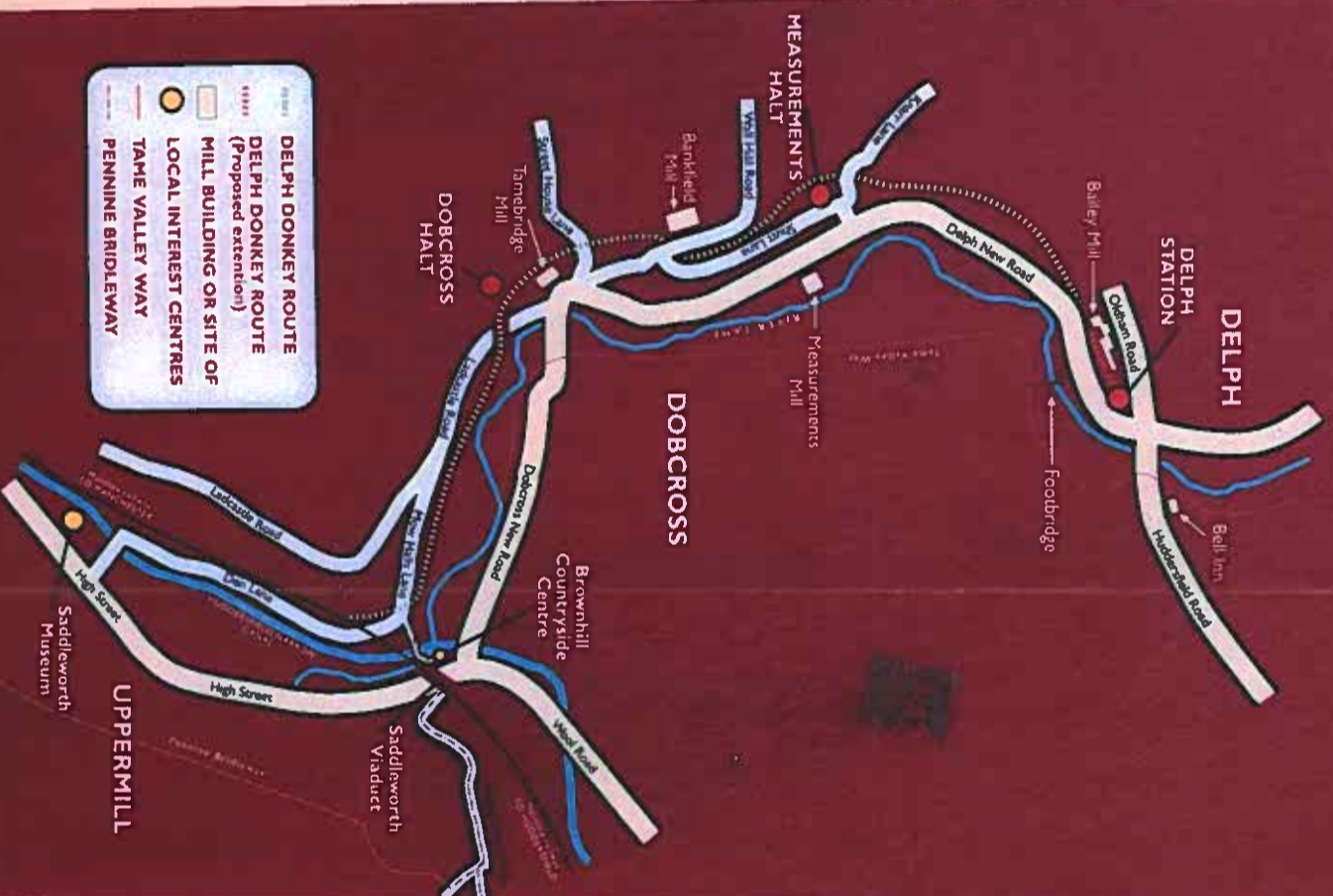
1880s

THE DELPH DONKEY TODAY

The Delph Donkey is now managed by the Oldham Countryside Service and is a popular 1.5 mile multi-use recreational route that is well used by cyclists, walkers and horseriders. It links well with other popular recreational routes in the area (e.g. the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and the Tame Valley Way), more details of which can be found at Brownhill Countryside Centre

Improvements made to the route with the help of various funding partners have made the route accessible to Bailey Mill. Ultimately it is hoped to fully open the route to the original terminus at Delph Station.

The Delph Donkey is also an important biodiversity corridor. Trees such as Silver Birch, Oak, Rowan, Willow and Hawthorn, together with several varieties of wildflowers, have reclaimed the embankments providing habitat for a diverse array of wildlife.



THE DELPH DONKEY BRANCH RAILWAY

The mainline Huddersfield to Manchester railway line through Saddleworth opened on 18th July 1849. Initially, the Delph Branch was viewed by the Railway Company as being of little importance. Although permission to build the route was granted in 1845, it wasn't until several years later, following pressure by local people and James Lees of Delph, a textile merchant and manufacturer, that work started on the Delph branch railway.

The Delph branch railway opened to Greenfield on 1st September 1851 with some of its early services from Greenfield to Delph being horse operated by Michael Stancilffe of Delph who later sold coal at Delph station. The use of a horse on some trains led to the line becoming nicknamed The Delph Donkey. Horsepower was short lived; the line from Greenfield to Oldham opened in 5th July 1856 making steam power viable, however the name Delph Donkey remained.



Photograph provided by Delph Museum as part of the Delph Donkey Project. Taken July 1963.

The railway allowed mass travel to and from Saddleworth to places of work, for day trips and the mass exodus of the Walkes Holidays.



Local railway engine at Delph Junction in June 1903 in front of the original stone carriage at Queen Mother Halt in the 1960s

The closure of the line to passengers came on 30th April 1955 as competition from bus companies increased. The line continued to carry a limited amount of freight. A royal train carrying The Queen Mother was one of the last to use the track as a quiet overnight rest halt in 1960.

The final end came for the Delph branch on 4th November 1963 with the official and total closure of the line. Just under a year later the rail was lifted and other remnants of the line removed, including the stationmaster's house at Delph.

There was a period when revival of the line for preservation was a possibility but regrettably this was never developed even though an engine and stock was installed at the Delph end. Although the railway infrastructure has mostly been removed, the architecture of the bridges, walls and buttresses remain as a lasting testament to the craftsmen of a bygone era.

Saddleworth
Museum

UPPERMILL

DOBXCROSS

DELPH

DELPH
STATION

MEASUREMENTS
HALT

DOBXCROSS
HALT

DELPH DONKEY ROUTE
DELPH DONKEY ROUTE
(Proposed extension)
MILL BUILDING OR SITE OF
LOCAL INTEREST CENTRES
TAME VALLEY WAY
PENNINE BRIDLEWAY