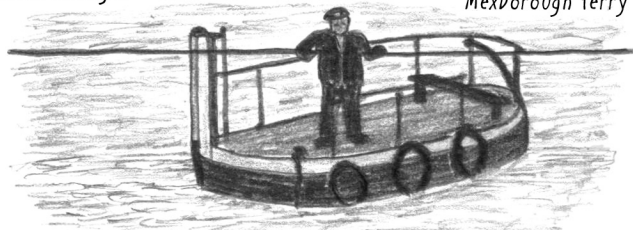


From 1938 to the mid-1940s, Hughes had a paper round, delivering to the hamlet of Old Denaby across the River Don from Mexborough. He crossed the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation Canal at the bridge on Station Road. He then cycled along the canal towpath to cross the Don via the old hand-operated ferry, before walking past Vinah's Pond (now Ferryboat Farm Fisheries) to Old Denaby. After delivering his last newspaper at Manor Farm, Hughes would drop off his bike in the farmyard and spend an hour or so – longer on weekends and holidays – roaming the farm's fields, hills and woods. Peas Hills, made up of the twin humps of Peas Hill and Hanging Hill, dominate this landscape and stand out across the river from Mexborough.

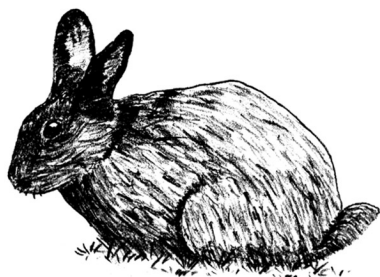
Mexborough ferry



Hughes first discovered Old Denaby when he helped his brother Gerald with his paper round in late 1938. Gerald had gained permission from the local farmers to roam their holdings and he often took young Teddy along with him. They shot birds with air rifles, trapped mice, rabbits and other small mammals and generally explored the landscape, seeking out its wildlife. As in Mytholmroyd, Gerald and Ted imaginatively transformed their countryside activities, developing a fantasy in which they were 'Red Indian' hunters and trappers.

When Gerald left the area to become a gamekeeper in Devon, and later to join the RAF, Ted felt orphaned, so close had he been to his brother. However, he continued to develop his imaginative reinterpretation of Old Denaby under the influence of his reading and his feelings of loss at Gerald's departure: 'My life over Old Denaby was a dream life - keeping going alone the life I'd lived with [Gerald]. He re-imagined Manor Farm as his 'Palaeolithic Eden' in which he never 'saw another soul', so feared was Mr Oats, the cantankerous farmer, memorably captured in Hughes's poem *Old Oats*.

Hughes wrote four poems and two stories that are directly set on Manor Farm: *Sunstroke*, *The Bull Moses*, *Two Horses*, *Old Oats*, *The Harvesting* and *The Rain Horse*. The 'great-beamed engine-shed' mentioned in *Sunstroke* can still be seen alongside what is now Manor Bar & Restaurant. A wooden sculpture near the ferry crossing by artist Shane Green celebrates some of this work and features the 'rain horse' and a hawk roosting.



Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire is a series of six route maps that will allow walkers to encounter the Yorkshire landscapes – Mytholmroyd and the Upper Calder Valley, Mexborough & the lower valleys of the Don & Dearne and Patrington in East Yorkshire – that formed and inspired Ted Hughes, poet laureate 1984-1998.

Edward James Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd in 1930 and moved with his family to Mexborough, near Doncaster, in September 1938, living there until the autumn of 1951. William and Edith, his parents, ran a newsagent's at 75 Main Street, and the family (parents, young 'Teddy' and older siblings Gerald and Olwyn) lived 'over the shop' (now a fast food take-away outlet). Hughes attended Mexborough Grammar School on College Road between 1941 and 1949, leaving to complete two years of National Service in the R.A.F. at Patrington before taking up the Exhibition to Pembroke College, Cambridge, he had won whilst at the school.

It was at Mexborough that Hughes resolved to become a poet, and he wrote his first poems there, publishing them in the school magazine, the *Don & Dearne*. These poems, including the rollicking western-themed poem *Wild West*, are published as *Juvenilia* in his *Collected Poems*.

Outside school, he explored the local countryside, honing the acute observational eye that would later become manifest in his poetry in activities such as shooting and fishing. It was during his South Yorkshire period that he developed his trademark myth-making imagination, transforming his experiences of nature by drawing on his reading and his rich inner life. Although he roamed the whole South Yorkshire landscape, Old Denaby, a hamlet just across the river from Mexborough was particularly important to him.

About thirty of Hughes's poems and short stories are about or have direct connections with places in South Yorkshire, and many are set in Mexborough and Old Denaby. Hughes greatly enjoyed his time in Mexborough, remarking that his family's move there was 'the best thing that ever happened to me'.

This map was commissioned by the Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire Consortium, the Ted Hughes Network, University of Huddersfield and enabled by generous funding from Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust.

The walk was devised by Steve Ely, based on previous trails devised by Ely, Dominic Somers and Stephen Miller. Thanks to the Ted Hughes Project (South Yorkshire) and Carol Hughes for their support in this map's production.

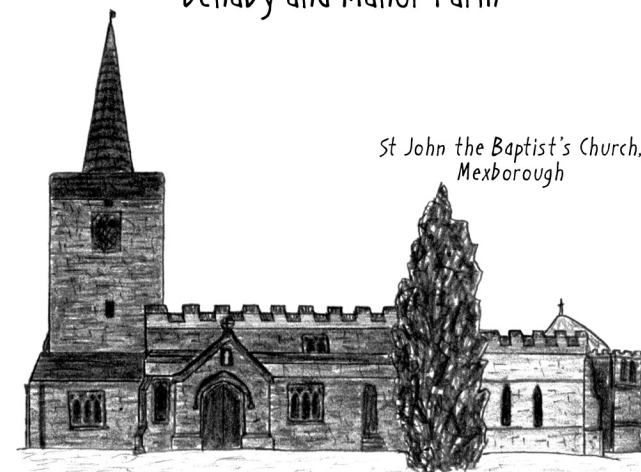
Leaflet drawn & designed by Christopher Goddard
www.christophergoddard.net

DISCOVERING TED HUGHES'S YORKSHIRE

South Yorkshire

MAP 4: MEXBOROUGH

A 3.5-mile walk around Ted Hughes's former home-town, following the route of his paper round to Old Denaby and Manor Farm



St John the Baptist's Church,
Mexborough

'Laid on a sack in the great-beamed engine-shed.
 I drank at stone, at iron of plough and harrow;
 Dulled in a pit, had thick walls of rain
 And voices in swaddled confinement near me
 Warm as veins.'
 (from *Sunstroke*)

**Ted Hughes
Network**



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