

THORNE TOWN TRAIL



Thorne Town Trail



The Thorne Town Trail is 2¹/₂ miles long and can be walked in an hour. At four points along it there are seats and grassed areas, lakes in the Park and the Delves, and a picnic area in the Toll Bar Grounds.

The canal towpath is apt to be muddy after rain, but it can be avoided by using Plantation Road and Union Road, a detour shown on the map. The letters at the start of the paragraph refer to features shown on the map.

The grade of features listed as of Architectural or Historical Importance is shown in brackets - (I), (II). The trail starts near the Parish Church.

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Before the surrounding marshland was drained in the 17th century, the only really dry ground in this area was the low ridge of sand on which you are now standing. The path along it was called High Trod.

- A.** At its highest point is Peel Hill, a Norman motte which at one time carried a fortified tower, probably erected by William de Warren, builder of Conisbrough Castle. Poachers on Hatfield Chase and other wrongdoers were imprisoned here. Shaped stones from the tower are visible in the churchyard wall opposite.
- B.** Large scale renovation of the Parish Church of St. Nicholas (I) in the 14th century hides earlier building features, some only visible inside the church. The unsquared stone cobbles in the lower walls shows the difficulty of finding building stone in an area which has no quarries. On the tower there are traces left when the nave roof was more steeply pitched (and perhaps thatched in reed). Two disused stone coffin lids have been built into the parapet of the porch, and a stone coffin is nearby (II). The Georgian Vicarage (11) is now a residential home. The name 'Stonegate' probably dates from a time when paved streets were rare here.

Walk down Church Street.

The 1866 school (11) is one of three endowed by the Travis Charity of 1706, the others being at Hatfield and Wroot. It is now a sculptor's studio.

Behind the school used to stand the Meeting House and Burial Ground which served Thorne's Quaker families. There is a strong tradition of non-conformity here. The trail passes three substantial Chapels. Those of the Congregationalists, Unitarians and Calvinists have been demolished or put to other use.

At the Market Place, turn right along King Street.

A Royal Charter to hold markets was granted in 1658 and renewed by King Charles II. The original documents are kept in the Town Council Offices (passed later on the Trail at Fieldside), and may be seen during office hours. Markets, administered by the Town Council, are held regularly on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday.



The White Hart, Market Place

The high facade of the White Hart (I I) dated 1737 conceals a mixture of earlier buildings. 19th century Mail Coaches travelling between Doncaster and Hull left here at 9am and 3pm daily.

Cross King Street at the Zebra Crossing and turn right.

- C.** The Darley family, local brewers, lived at No 44A, the white Georgian house with bow windows (II). The range of outbuildings bordering a cobbled lane has recently been renovated for residential use (II). Although the brewery is now closed, its tower and facade have been preserved, and can be seen later in the walk.

The shop, boldly dated 1749 on its gable, was originally a farmhouse. Similar iron numerals and letters can be found elsewhere in Thorne, and in Hatfield and Stainforth.

Local Methodists now meet in what was the Wesleyan Church, founded in 1826.

- D.** The Old Grammar School, built 1862, catered for both day boys and boarders. It was administered by the Brooke's Trust and closed in 1930 when the mixed Thorne Grammar School was opened. It was brought back into use during the last war to cater for numbers increased by evacuees from Hull, who stayed with Thorne families.

Walk down the lane alongside the former Bethesda Chapel (1817 with a facade of 1893), which leads to Queen Street, at various times known as Low Trod or Back Street. Turn left to the Green and cross to the pedestrianised shopping street.



The former Town Hall, Finkle Street

The Royal Oak used to stand on the left where the car park entrance is now. It was one of Thorne's two Common Lodging Houses which offered very basic accommodation to workmen and less affluent travellers. Some of the buildings on the pedestrianised Finkle Street are quite old. Look at the upper storeys of Law's fruiterers (II) which retain the Georgian sash windows.

The name 'Finkle' is usually understood to describe a street with a bend. Thorne's street bends towards the Market Place.

- E.** The paved area on the right at the end of Finkle Street is the cleared site of the Victorian Town Hall, which served as concert hall, dance hall and market hall until its demolition in the early 1960s. The view of the Market Place from here was a favourite with early photographers. A range of small shops, similar to those on your left, used to stand where the banks are now. Hirst's ironmongers shop retains the traditional appearance both inside and outside.

Cross the road bearing left and turn right into Silver Street.

The white painted building on Silver Street was the Police Station. In 1907 the Council proposed that the local force be reduced from 4 to 3 policemen, a suggestion which was rejected. Four years later an additional policeman was stationed at Stainforth to deal with 'rough persons passing through' while collieries were being sunk at Hatfield and Askern.

- F.** The large house at the crossroads with a pillared doorway (II) was the home of the banker Abraham Ellison and from 1834 of a succession of doctors. It is still known as "Dr. Taylor's House."

Turn right into South Parade.

At the bend near the former 1907 Primitive Methodist Chapel, a bridge carried the road over the Boating Dike. This was a waterway which drained the moors, wide enough to permit the use of boats bringing peat for fuel or stable litter. Although it is now in a culvert, it is still possible to trace its route from the moors to the River Don near Waterside about a mile from the centre of the town.

The generous width of South Parade was fixed in the early 1770s.

During Thorne June Fair, horses offered for sale were exercised along the road. The side road is still called Horse Fair Green. During Fair Week the watermen held their own Sports on the canal and stalls were erected on streets and in The Green. Fairs of this kind were held until the 1940s.

- G. A lettered manhole cover outside the Optician's is a reminder of the days when Thorne had its own iron foundries. Seventy years ago it also had its own waterworks, gasworks, leather tanneries and brickyard.

Cross the road at the Zebra Crossing and enter the park.

The bell above the gate is to give warning of the locking of the Park gates.

The groundsman's store next to the park gate was originally a Public Air Raid Shelter, built in 1940.

The two large public water pumps originally stood in The Green and the Market Place.

Although the water was used for drinking, it was brought by pipes from the canal! Read the inscription on the further one, commemorating the Crimean War (II). Beside the lake is the War Memorial.

- H. Thorne Hall (II), now housing Council Offices, was built in the 1820s by a wealthy farmer called Wormley and later used by business men, including Makin Durham, a landowner expert in 'warping' - using fine river silt to improve soil and to raise the level of the land. The extensions were added during a period when the Hall was being used as a girls' boarding school. The single storey building adjoining the Hall was the town's Fire Station. The Hall stood in extensive grounds, including what is now the park. To the rear of the Hall was a further 15 acres of grounds and a large walled kitchen garden. 100m along the road to the right is the coachman's cottage and tackroom. Behind the Hall is the appropriately named Green Top School, built in 1939 and chosen to illustrate the best of West Riding schools in a 1946 County brochure.

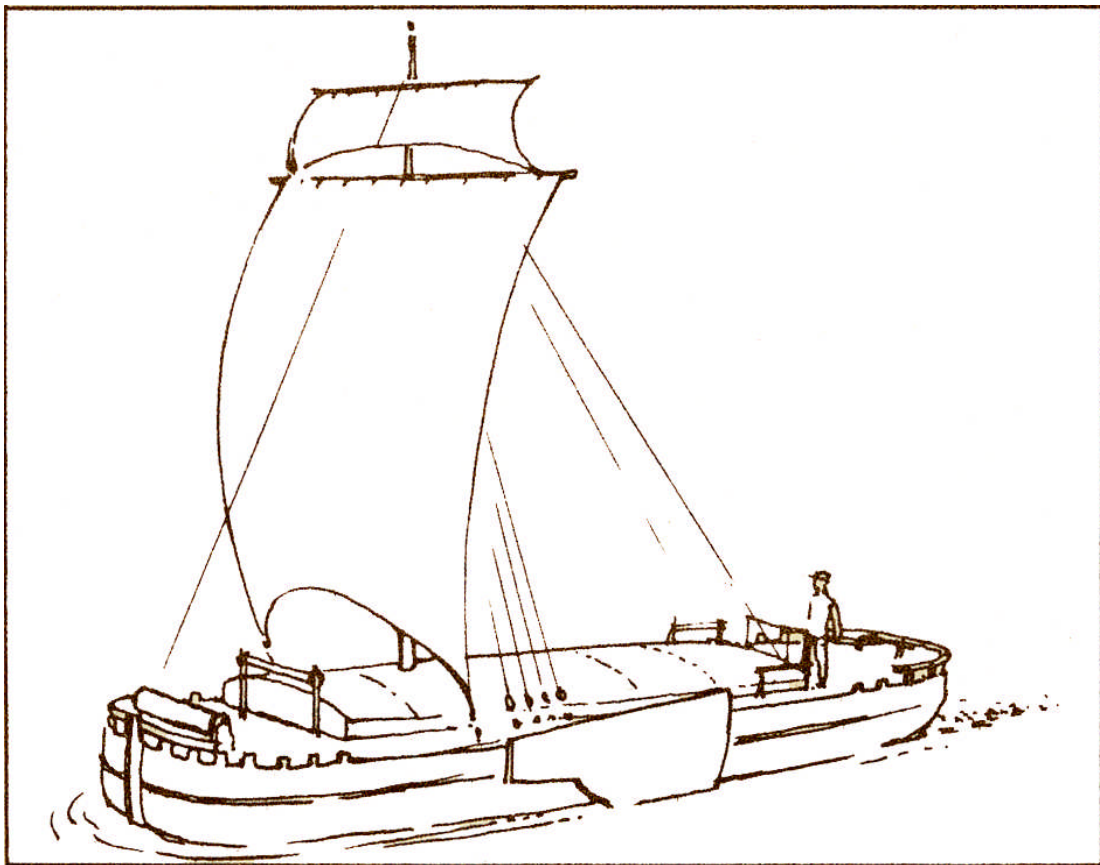
Return to the park entrance and across the zebra crossing. Turn

left to the Canal Flyover.

- I. Before the construction of the M18, all traffic travelling from South Yorkshire to Hull and the East Coast came along this road and crossed the canal on a narrow swing bridge. Its site can be seen low down alongside the present bridge. Whenever a boat passed, however small, the swing bridge was opened causing massive traffic jams. A century ago tolls were charge on all users of the bridge.

The canal, opened in 1797, leads from Stainforth to the Trent at Keadby. It provided an easier route than the tidal rivers for the Humber Keels. Keels were barges with a square rigged sail.

They carried the bulky cargoes such as coal, pig iron and stone, as well as farm produce. One keel called 'Comrade' is now preserved in Hull and was working until 1975.



A Humber Keel barge

Over the bridge, turn sharp right past the Rising Sun, turn left after the garage into the Toll Bar Recreation Grounds.

- J.** The path is about three metres (10 feet) above sea level - below high tide! In mediaeval times, the whole area was waterlogged, and a difference in height as little as a couple of metres separated the 'islands' of drier ground from the shallow lakes or 'meres'. A bank of this kind, separating wet from dry, is clearly visible running across the Recreation Ground beyond the football field. Constant attention to drainage is still essential throughout the area.



The bank at Toll Bar recreation Ground

Cross the wooden bridge over the drainage ditch onto the towpath.

- K.** Look across the canal. The white building was the Station House for Thorne's first railway, which was operated in the late 1850s in partnership with the canal owners. It ran along the canal from Doncaster to Keadby.
- L.** The derelict area further along the bank was Richard Dunston's shipyard. Keels were built here from the 1850s and small coastal vessels until the 1970s. The yard was at its busiest during the Second World War, when a total of 231 welded steel vessels were built - diesel and steam tugs and coasters. Launching had to be made broadside into the canal; the resulting wave always flooded the towpath opposite.
- M.** Look for the Rope Walk, just visible through the railings. Now a footpath, it was originally an open yard 200m long where ropes for use on ships were manufactured.
- N.** The Lock cuts through a 17th century floodbank known as Ashfield Bank, which stretches back to Stainforth, parallel to the river. It

was raised by the Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden, who undertook the drainage of the whole area from the Don to the Trent on behalf of Charles I. Financial backing totalling £400,000 came from a group of Dutch 'Participants', who received reclaimed land in return. There are still families with Dutch surnames in the area - Gelder, Brunyee, and Dimaline. Vermuyden later undertook the even bigger task of draining the Cambridgeshire fenlands.



Thorne Lock

- A short distance along Union Road on your right, a large Union Workhouse was erected in 1763, well away from the town. It served a large area and held 150 inmates at a time when Thorne's total population was about 2000. Parts of the building still stand, used now by the Sea Cadets and as a Retirement Home.



The former Union Workhouse, Union Road

Go straight ahead and follow the narrow footpath running along the top of the floodbank.

- P.** The River Don, a mile away on your left, flooded regularly. The bank protected the town. Imagine the force of the water in high flood bursting through the bank and scouring out a deep hollow, known locally as a "gyme". Here at Hanson's Gyme the rebuilt bank takes a wide sweep around the hollow.

Cross White Lane and enter 'The Delves' fishing and recreation ground.

- Q.** To form the railway embankment, earth was dug from adjoining fields. In 1982 money from a Town Lottery was used to buy and extend the 'delves', stock them with fish and provide a clubhouse and seats as an amenity for the town. The footbridge on the skyline is that of Thorne North Station of the Doncaster-Hull line of 1869.

Cross the road with care. It is the A614, and can be busy. Turn right along Fieldside.

The floodbank ends here at the higher ground which formed the mediaeval North Field. The pinfold, a pen for straying animals, used to be near the bank.

- R.** Field House, with its splendid cedar tree, was for many years the only house here. A 19th century tenant, a Mr. Pearson, had a boatyard on the Don where he built some of the first steam powered vessels. There was a regular Steam Packet (paddle steamer) service along the Don from Waterside to Hull. Waterside, near Junction 6 of the M18, is now a very quiet place. The river has been diverted away from the stone wharf and the John Bull Inn, named after one of the packet boats, is virtually the only reminder of its busy past.

Across the road, the flats stand on the site of Thorne Old Hall, where Vermuyden lived when supervising the drainage of Thorne.

- S.** The Library, built in 1905, is one of the many financed by Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish philanthropist. The first lending library in Thorne was established in 1828, when subscribers had a choice of 500 books. The present library has been replaced by a modern Library in

the Town Centre.

The name of the narrow Foundry Lane on the opposite side is the only evidence of its earlier use.

Fieldside Adult Centre occupies the 1876 Board School. Early photographs show it with a spire. The cast iron milestone seems to have been designed for the other side of the road, which was upgraded as the Bawtry to Selby Turnpike Road in 1797.

- T. The Temperance Institute across the road was built to provide an alternative meeting place to the Public Houses. The Band of Hope was very active at the turn of the century and there was a Temperance Brass Band. The Institute was licensed annually for the performance of plays. The Market Charters mentioned earlier are kept in the Town Council offices on the ground floor.

Turn left at the traffic lights into Field Road.

- U. The large building at the corner of Field Road, now Hind's Chambers, originally housed Sim Templeman's steam powered flour mill. A later proprietor was Joe Hind, an engineer who built his own motor car in 1902. His licence to sell petrol was granted in 1908. Mr. Hind later built a factory near Thorne North Station to manufacture, under licence, the special 'Moss' gearbox for early Ford vehicles, including the Model T.
- V. The Water Tower was the first of two which now supply the town. Boreholes were sunk at Dunsville in 1911 to provide water for Thorne and Hatfield. Before that time, there had been only two deep boreholes, one supplying the brewery, the other at the workhouse. Everyone else took their water either from the canal or the river!
- W. North Eastern Road follows the line of the mediaeval High Trod. Along the low ridge were six windmills ('Z' on the map). The shell of only one remains (II). During the war the small building was added to its top when the Royal Observer Corps kept watch there for enemy aircraft. The mill owner lived at Northfield House.

Cross Field Road and continue along St. Nicholas Road.

- X. A large mock Tudor House on the right, known locally as the Mansion, was

built in 1898 for the Darley family. It now houses the Thorne House Autistic Community.

- Y. Thorne Grammar School was built in 1930 as a mixed school serving a wide area which included Hatfield, Stainforth, Armthorpe and Finningley. It was the senior high school for Thorne pupils, and its large Hall was used for a wide variety of community events. Trinity Academy has replaced the Grammar School and was built on the old school fields.

CREDITS

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