

# South Humber HERITAGE TRAIL

## WHITTON



### A Wildlife Wonderland

The Humber Estuary is one of the world's most important wetland habitats. Its unique ecosystems make it significant for nature conservation and a key destination for hundreds of thousands of birds. Species include internationally-important populations of wigeon, teal, pochard, sanderling, brent geese, shelduck, lapwing, knot, and rare birds such as marsh harrier, bittern and bearded tit. The estuary was designated as a Ramsar site in 1994.

#### The Mighty Marsh Harrier

A glance above the estuary at Whitton might offer the chance sighting of this mighty bird. The largest of the harriers, it is at risk with only 360 breeding pairs in the country. It patrols the reed beds for small birds and mammals.



#### Long-Legged Wading Birds

The estuary is an important destination for wading birds; their characteristic long legs are perfectly adapted for following the ebb and flow of the tide. The shape of their bills gives an indication of how they feed — oystercatchers stab at the sand, curlews probe deep into the mud and dunlin wade in the shallows.



### On the Heritage Trail

The South Humber Heritage Trail is split in two sections and can be walked in either direction between Burton-upon-Stather and Winterringham and between Barton-upon-Humber and South Ferryby. There are several car parks along the trail and regular bus services between the villages.

Along the trail are seven information panels at Burton-upon-Stather picnic area; Countess Close medieval earthwork at Alkborough; the Humber bank at Whitton; Winterringham Haven; River Ancholme Car Park at South Ferryby; the Old Cement Works at Far Ings; and the Waters' Edge at Barton-upon-Humber.

Within this pack are leaflets providing information about the South Humber Heritage Trail and each of the five villages along the trail, and details of local walks. As well as the fascinating buildings and historic sites to discover the villages offer a number of establishments to cater for a pleasant refreshment stop.



#### How to get there

The South Humber Heritage Trail is located along the South Humber Bank between Barton-upon-Humber (7 miles south-west of Hull), and Burton-upon-Stather (5 miles north-west of Scunthorpe).

#### Exploring the Humber's Heritage

Trail leaflets are available from tourist attractions and information centres across the region, and can be downloaded from the South Humber Collection website: [www.south-humber-collection.org](http://www.south-humber-collection.org). The Ordnance Survey Explorer 281 map covers the route of the trail.

#### South Humber Bank Wildlife and People Project

Far Ings National Nature Reserve Visitor Centre  
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust  
Off Far Ings Road, Barton-upon-Humber  
North Lincolnshire DN18 5RG



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## Whitton Village

The hamlet of 'Witenai' or 'white island of land' was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086AD. This Old English place name for Whitton may refer to marshy land surrounding a peninsula of dry ground jutting into the Humber and the colour of the local limestone strata.

The village has Anglo-Saxon origins and yet the earliest archaeological finds date from prehistory. There is also evidence of extensive Roman settlement around the village. Towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, Viking ships sailed up the Humber on raiding expeditions. Their shallow-draught boats could land on the Humber shore and a Viking silver-gilt brooch has been found at Whitton, perhaps evidence of settlers.

The original 11th century church was largely rebuilt in the 1890s, and the tower roof was remodelled. As with other churches along the South Humber Bank, the tower contains massive blocks of Roman building stone, probably sourced from the monumental ruins in York. Until the mid 1600s, a great medieval hall stood on the cliff top west of the church.

Long before the North Lindsey Light Railway reached Whitton in 1910, the villagers travelled by ferry boat from the pier erected in 1865. Passengers could transfer onto larger steam packet boats, which occasionally ran aground on Whitton Sands at low tide. The pier and the railway are long gone. This quiet village has many a story of its long history and offers a pleasant location from which to explore the surrounding area.

From here, on a clear day, the towers of York Minster can be seen in the distance some 30 miles away. The village also affords some of the best views of modern shipping, where the deep-water channel of the Humber passes close to the land.

## From Whitton to Alkborough

The attractive village of Alkborough lies within easy reach along the South Humber Heritage Trail, two-and-a-half miles south-west of Whitton. The trail passes above Devil's Causeway, a natural rock outcrop visible at low tide. There are stunning views overlooking Alkborough Flats, a low-lying flood plain bounded by the confluence of the Rivers Ouse and Trent. A great number of waders and wildfowl are attracted to this carefully-managed area.

During World War II, the Flats were used as a training bombing range and many practice bombs have since been found there. Along the Trail is one of the bombing range observation posts. Also on the Flats is the site of a small fort that played its part during the English Civil War in the 17th century.

Alkborough is home to Julian's Bower, a delightful medieval turf-cut maze, and Countess Close medieval earthwork. Both are well worth visiting before returning to Whitton.

### Romans above Alkborough Flats

Archaeological surveys have identified a number of Romano-British settlements along the high ground between Whitton and Alkborough. From this commanding position the Romans may have had a trading station on the Flats below where boats could land. The Humber would have been a main artery for importing goods from the Roman Empire.



### Beasts of the River Bank

One mythical creature associated with this area of Lincolnshire is the tatter-foal; a goblin who appears in the shape of a small rough-coated horse. Preying on the unsuspecting traveller at night, it is said to lure them into a stream or river before vanishing with 'half horse neigh and half human laugh'. Local folklore also speaks of ghost dogs and riders patrolling the Devil's Causeway.



### Anglo-Saxon Death and Burial

An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was discovered in a private garden near Whitton church. The remains of thirty or more individuals were unearthed and traces of oak chest coffins bound with iron fittings were found. These Christian burials pre-date the church that stands today by more than two centuries. This suggests there was an earlier Saxon church here.



### The End of The Line

In 1910, the extension of the North Lindsey Light Railway from Winteringham to Whitton was opened, operating a goods and passenger service to Scunthorpe. There was a goods yard and jetty at the end of the line where loads were transferred onto barges. The passenger service ceased in 1925 and, after closure of the goods line in 1951, the track was removed.



### Learning from Lichen

A closer look at the limestone walls around Whitton will reveal a number of different lichens. Whilst less obvious than colourful flora, they are valuable indicators of the quality of the air and water. Key studies have used lichen to determine the impact industry can have on the surrounding natural environment.

