

Out and about around

Barton-upon-Humber

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Holy Trinity Church, Barrow-on-Humber



Brocklesby Station

Barton-upon-Humber is a small historic town situated on the south bank of the River Humber, in the old north Lincolnshire area of Lindsey. It is almost opposite the large city and port of Kingston-upon-Hull. The name is derived from 'Beretun', which meant 'Barley Town', a tribute to its importance in the supply and trading of barley malt, the basis of beer brewing. Indeed, there was a time in the early Middle Ages when Barton was far more important than Hull, supplying more ships and men for the king's service. But after Edward I conferred his royal favour on Hull in the late 13th century, Barton steadily lost its pre-eminence on the Humber, although it remained an important base for river trade and ferries. My own connection with Barton is that my father's family comes from there and it is practically the only area where they don't think my surname is strange or ask how to spell it!

The most obvious sign of the early importance of Barton for the visitor is that the town has two splendid ancient churches, which stand remarkably close to each other. The older of the two is St Peter's, which has a Saxon tower and was founded about 900 A.D. The land on which the church stands was originally part of the holdings of St Chad's monastery, which was transferred to Bardney Abbey in south Lincolnshire after the Norman Conquest. The lords of the manor regarded St Peter's as their own church. It survived the Reformation, with reduced role and land, finally becoming disused in the 1970s. It is now in the hands of English Heritage and contains much interesting information about the town's early history and a tribute to the many men of Barton who fell in World War I. The former vicarage of St Peter's, which is nearby, has a plaque on the wall recording the birth there in 1911 of Chad Varah, the founder of the Samaritans, who was the son of the vicar.

The other impressive church is St Mary's. This started life as All Saints,

probably before Norman times, as a chapel to St Peter's but, in the 12th century, it rapidly became the town's parish church, supported by the growing population. It was greatly extended in the 13th century and, in 1248, the church was re-dedicated by Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln with a name change to St Mary's. There are some interesting monuments inside this church, which remains in use as Barton's parish church.

The visitor to Barton will find a wealth of Georgian and Victorian buildings which have survived largely unchanged. Until the nearby Humber Bridge was opened in 1981, the town was isolated from the industrial growth on the north bank of the river and this has allowed it to remain largely undeveloped, although its population has increased greatly over the last two centuries. Car parking is reasonably available and mostly free.

A good point to start a walking tour of Barton is the Baysgarth House Museum, which is itself an 18th century building. This is easily found by following the brown heritage direction signs. It is set in the pleasant Baysgarth Park. The museum, which is open on Friday, weekend and Bank Holiday afternoons only, has many interesting items on Barton's history and useful trail leaflets to guide the visitor on a tour round the historic buildings and the two churches of the town.

A short walk from the Baysgarth Museum brings us to Barton Market Place. Here, the agricultural community used to transact business for many years, although there has been no open market held since the 1920s. The George Hotel on the corner of the Market Place dates from the 17th century, but was Barton's main coaching inn during the 18th and 19th centuries. A further short walk brings us to Priestgate, where nearly all the houses are Georgian; perhaps the best example is Cob Hall, dated to 1766. Following round past St Peter's church will bring us to Tyrwhitt Hall, whose 18th century brick exterior conceals a much older building, which includes a 15th century timber framed great hall. Returning to the Market Place leads us up Whitecross Street, with many fine examples of Georgian work, particularly Bardney Hall, built in the early 1700s. We have now returned to Baysgarth Park.

As well as Georgian buildings, Barton has many good examples of Victorian work. Leaving the Market Place and walking via George Street, we quickly reach High Street, where the former Police Station has the date of 1847 over its central door. There were also cells and a Magistrates' Court in this building. The Court ceased as recently as



Thornton Abbey Gatehouse



George Hotel, Barton

1995 and the police only moved out in 2005. There are several chapel buildings in this area, reflecting the many Methodist divisions of the 19th Century.

Pride of place for Victorian Barton must go to Queen Street, off High Street. Here were important educational developments. In 1831, a charity school was established here and its first master was Isaac Pitman, who became famous for his system of shorthand, which was started here. Pitman married a Barton girl and then moved on. This school closed and the site now has two imposing Victorian houses. Across the street is the newly restored (2009) National School, founded in 1844. Samuel Wilderspin was its first superintendent and he pioneered infant education, with use of a gallery and a monitorial system. His educational ideas spread nationally and internationally. The school functioned, mostly as a Junior school, until 1978. It remained derelict until recently, but a campaign to restore it has been successful and it has

now been re-opened as an interactive museum, complete with restored Wilderspin gallery. This museum is well worth visiting!

From Queen Street, we turn next into Newport Street. On the corner is a fine building, known as New Hall. It has both Georgian and Victorian features and dates back to about 1690. Following up Newport Street, our next destination is Fleetgate, which is one of Barton's oldest routes, leading up from the Humber. It has several old properties on it, which are worth inspecting, and there are more signs of Barton's early importance and wealth. Despite the ordinary appearance of the shops in front of it, the house behind them at No.51, Fleetgate, belonged to a wealthy medieval merchant and its internal timbers have been reliably dated to 1325. Later extensions included a large oak framed hall, dated to 1425, with a crown post roof. This property has survived the centuries largely intact, despite the later use as a house and shops. Viewing

is by courtesy of Barton Civic Society, who hold regular open days and tours of the building. (Their website is www.bartoncivicsociety.co.uk).

At the bottom end of Fleetgate is Barton's railway station, which surprisingly survived the Beeching 'axe'. There is a regular service from here to Grimsby and Cleethorpes. The railway reached Barton in 1849, with plans for a through route to Winterton and beyond, which came to nothing. A substantial station and goods shed was built in 1855 by the company which later became the Central Railway. The buildings were demolished by British Rail in 1973 and the track layout simplified. The station is now the ubiquitous bus shelter, served by a single track.

We are now in the Barton Waterside area, which was separate from the rest of the town, until the 19th century. Here were Barton's industries. Nearby in Marsh Lane was Hopper's Cycles, founded in 1880, which was the local major employer. Many Barton people worked here and Hopper cycles were well known over the world, until the industry folded in the 1970s. Another big industry on the Humber bank was brick and tile making, of which little remains now. These were shipped via the Humber to many destinations. On Waterside Road, Hall's Barton Ropery employed many locals in making ropes for ships and industry for over a century, closing in the 1980s. The long Ropewalk, with its pantiled roof, fortunately has survived as a craft gallery. Another local employer which has sadly disappeared was the malting industry, which had been a staple industry for Barton for several centuries. Barton Haven has mostly silted up, but there are modest ship repairs. Gone also from Waterside Road is St Chad's church, which was a chapel for St Mary's.

So, we reach the Humber bank. A viewing area for the Humber Bridge has been made, giving a spectacular view of this structure, for some years the world's longest suspension bridge. For many centuries, ferries crossed the river from Barton to the growing port of Hull. One traveller of note who came

this way was Daniel Defoe on his 'Tour' of England in the early 18th century. He noted that the crossing to Hull was long and rough on the Humber and he was also not very happy about the livestock which accompanied the passengers! But in the late 1840s the railway company developed nearby New Holland Pier and Barton ceased to be the main departure point for Hull. In recent years much of the Barton waterfront has been re-developed as a nature reserve, with the remaining industrial units now well to the east of the town.

There is also much to see in the North Lincolnshire villages in Barton's immediate hinterland. There are two main routes – one to the west and the other to the east.

Following the road west from Barton past the Humber Bridge takes us a short distance over the Lincolnshire Wolds to South Ferriby. This is an old village, which, like many of the villages of the area, has roots in the Danish settlement which took place before 1066. It is one of five known as the 'Low Villages', situated as they are on the spring line at the foot of the Wolds. The village mainly depended on farming and chalk quarrying. The chalk is now used as a basis for road stone, cement and several other products, processed in the large works nearby. The ancient parish church of St Nicholas is prominent on its hillside, from where there are good views of the river.

Taking the road towards Winterton and Scunthorpe brings us quickly beside the Humber, where it is joined by the River Ancholme. This point is Ferriby Sluice. For centuries, the tidal Ancholme flooded its valley and the land was mostly unusable until you reached the higher ground across the valley near Winterton. In the 17th century, there was growing interest in drainage and the local landowners installed the first sluice at Ferriby about 1636. Unfortunately, the Civil War came shortly afterwards and South Ferriby was a stronghold for the Parliamentarian Nelthorpe family. Winterton was in the Royalist camp and there was, in any case, an old animosity

towards the men of Ferriby. In the fighting, the Winterton men destroyed Ferriby Sluice and the land was badly flooded again. It was not until the middle of the 18th century that drainage work was resumed, with the new interest in agriculture. Finally, a canalised Ancholme and a new Ferriby Sluice were completed by 1845 and farming could take place safely in the valley.

Pausing past Ferriby Sluice, the prominent feature in the river is Read's Island. This island is thought to have been a large mudbank in the river for many centuries. But, by the late 18th century, enough grass had colonised it to make it worthwhile for animals to graze there. The Read brothers were local farmers who did this, hence the name of the island. Censuses in the 19th century usually record one farming family on the island and it stayed occupied in this fashion until the 1970s. The island then became deserted, until it became a nature reserve in the late 20th century. Read's Island is nationally important as a reserve for avocets and no-one may land there without permission. In recent years, concern has been expressed that the island is shrinking, being washed away by the river and the passage of shipping up the Humber.

Retracing the journey to South Ferriby, a right turn there takes us along the Wolds road to Horkstow. This is an ancient village and, for the visitor, there are two things of interest here. Firstly, in 1796, whilst alterations were being carried out to Horkstow Hall, a Roman mosaic pavement and several other remains were discovered. This pavement is now in the museum at Hull. Secondly, if you take the aptly named Bridge Lane from the village, a short journey brings you to Horkstow Bridge over the Ancholme. This is a splendid suspension bridge built in 1835 by the engineer, Sir John Rennie, (famous for designing London Bridge), to link the village with the brick kilns, which have now all gone, but this was a very flourishing industry in the 19th century, employing many local people.

Returning to the Wolds road, the next village of the five is Saxby All Saints.

New Holland Pier



Horkstow Bridge





Queen Street School



St Peter's Church Barton

The church here was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott and completed in 1849. At Bonby, the church is medieval, with brick restoration. At Worlaby, the church is a restoration of 1873, containing 17th century tombs. Following towards Brigg, the ancient 'capital' of north Lincolnshire, the road comes to Wrawby. Here is the last working post mill in the north of England. Built in the late 18th century, it has been carefully restored and there are Open Days (last Sundays in June and July and all Bank Holidays) on which it functions. From there, it is an easy journey back to Barton.

Leaving Barton on the east side, the main road leads to Barrow-upon-Humber. This is an ancient settlement, where St Chad established a monastery, subsequently destroyed by the Danes in the 9th Century. The village also had a motte and bailey castle after 1066 and the sizeable church of Holy Trinity is of medieval foundation. Barrow's most famous citizen was John Harrison, the clock maker, who lived in Barrow for a number of years in the 18th century. Harrison's name is forever associated with his attempts to solve the problems of finding longitude at sea and many of his early experiments with chronometers were started in Barrow and nearby Barton. He had a long struggle to convince the reluctant authorities of his solution. There is, as yet, no memorial to Harrison in Barrow but the local Primary school has been re-named in his honour and attempts continue to raise the profile of this important inventor. (See the Spring 2009 edition of *The Historian*)

Turning north from Barrow, it is a short distance to New Holland. Although there has been a settlement here for many years, this village owed its importance and growth to the railway company, which later became the Central Railway. Ferries to Hull from Barton proved unreliable and often

involved lengthy journeys, due to river currents and sandbanks, exposed at low water. The railway reached Grimsby in the early 1840s and sought a more reliable crossing to Hull from north Lincolnshire. The invention of the coal fired paddle steamer meant that a viable harbour was needed opposite Hull. So, land was bought at New Holland from the Earl of Yarborough and a pier of a quarter of a mile in length, so it was always in deep enough water, was constructed. The railway track was laid along this pier and the steam ferries moored at the end to take train passengers and vehicles. This service started with the *Falcon* in 1845 and finished with the *Farringford* in 1981, when the Humber Bridge was opened. An interesting note is that the three main stalwarts of the service in the period 1934-1974 still survive. *Lincoln Castle* is part of the Grimsby Maritime Museum; *Wingfield Castle* is moored at Hartlepool Maritime Museum; and *Tattersall Castle* is used as a floating restaurant by the Thames Embankment in London. After the ferry service ceased, New Holland pier was closed to the public and sold to a Dutch trading firm, which uses many lorries that by-pass the village. It is still possible to reach the Humber bank close by the pier, using a narrow lane with care.

From New Holland, the road south leads back to Barrow. There, by turning left, we come quickly to the village of Thornton Curtis. Here, another left turn will bring us to the remains of Thornton Abbey, which is in the care of English Heritage. The abbey was a community of Augustinian canons, founded in 1139. The most impressive part of the Abbey ruins is the large fortified gatehouse, built in the 1360s as a defence against local rebels. The abbey was attacked during the Peasants' Revolt of the 1380s. When order was restored, the peasants were forced to repair the damage they

had caused! The abbey was dissolved in 1539, but was still mostly intact when Henry VIII stayed there in 1541, on a journey to Hull to inspect its defences. The abbey has been despoiled of most of its stone for local building during the 17th and 18th centuries. Perhaps surprisingly, Thornton Abbey has kept its own railway station.

One other feature of this area is worthy of a mention. Returning to Thornton Curtis, a left turn will bring us down to Ulceby. Turning right in the village brings us shortly to Brocklesby station. All the land in this part belonged to the Earls of Yarborough who still live at Brocklesby Park. When the railway company wanted to build their line to Grimsby in the 1840s, in order to secure the land from the then Earl of Yarborough, the company had to agree to give him his own station, near his house. This was a common practice in the 19th century for the nobility. This became Brocklesby station, built in grand Victorian style. Eventually, it was opened for public use. But the steps at the side leading down to the platform were reserved for the Yarborough family's use. The station is now closed for passengers, but the buildings remain and are listed for preservation.

The above is only a selection of what can be seen in and around Barton. The area is easily reached from the motorway network and local roads. It is a very interesting neighbourhood to visit, which will reward those with an eye for local historic gems.

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