

The Red Fox Thornton Hough and Brimstage Trail, Wirral, Merseyside



Moderate Terrain

5 miles
Circular
2 to 2.5
hours

140715



Access Notes



1. The walk is almost entirely flat with just a couple of gentle slopes.
2. The paths follow sections of pavement and also pass through woodland and fields where it can be very muddy underfoot, so good boots are a must.
3. You will need to negotiate some kissing gates plus 3 stiles (all of the stiles have gaps alongside/ underneath that should be suitable for medium-large dogs to pass through, our standard poodle managed just fine).
4. Whilst most of the fields are arable, three of the fields may be holding cattle at certain times of the year so take care with dogs.

The Red Fox is a beautiful old brick and sandstone hall with a well-stocked bar at its heart and lots of rooms where you can enjoy a drink or bite to eat.

A 5 mile circular pub walk from the Red Fox in Thornton Hough in the Wirral, Merseyside. The walking route takes in the two historic villages of Thornton Hough and Brimstage as well as the peaceful areas of parkland and farmland in between. You will have chance to see a range of historic halls and manor houses, plenty of pretty cottages and even a maze of maize.

Getting there

Thornton Hough is located on the Wirral Peninsula in Merseyside, about 10 miles from Chester. The walk starts and finishes at the Red Fox on Liverpool Road (B5136), just south of the village itself. The pub has its own large car park.

Approximate post code **CH64 7TL**.

Walk Sections



Start to Village Smithy



From the Red Fox walk back along the entrance drive to reach the road. Turn left along the pavement and follow this heading north towards the village of Thornton Hough. On the right you will pass the old Thornton Hall, now a spa and hotel. Once the home of wealthy shipping merchants, the Bamford Brothers of Liverpool, it is believed to have been built in the mid 1800s. It was transformed into a hotel in the 1950s and many of its original features remain intact including an ornate mother of pearl embossed ceiling in the Italian Room. Continue past properties on the left and then on the left you will pass an old stone building, once a lodge for the Thornton Manor estate...more of that later.

Eventually you will come to the large village green across to the right. At the far side of the green you will be able to see one row of the village's many pretty

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black and white half-timbered properties (Wilshaw Terrace) and the impressive tall spire of All Saints Church. Take a moment to admire the view of this quintessential village which holds a fascinating past. The name of the village was established when the daughter of local landowner Roger de Thornton, married Richard de Hoghe during the reign of Edward II. Joseph Hirst, a Yorkshire woollen mill owner, bought farmland here in 1866 and began the development of the model village we still see today, building All Saints Church, a school and Wilshaw Terrace.

Continue along the pavement and, as you draw level with the top of the green, cross over the side road to continue along the main road as it swings right. On the left you will see the Village Smithy, a black and white property which once housed the village blacksmith and farrier.

1 → 2 Village Smithy to Tree Avenue



Continue along the pavement passing some pretty cottages and the Women's Institute on the left. Immediately after the WI you will come to a particularly ornate set of terraced cottages, also on the left. Look up to the roof line and you will see a pair of beautiful intricate brick chimneys and, a little further along, take time to enjoy the stretch of pargetting (decorative external plastering).

At the crossroads keep straight ahead passing the second village church, St George's, on the left. This church owes its existence to the village's next philanthropist, William Lever (Viscount Leverhulme). Viscount Leverhulme was one of the world's greatest industrialists who, with his brother, founded Lever Brothers. Lever Brothers was one of several British companies that took a keen interest in the welfare of its employees, providing good quality housing, with high architectural standards and many community facilities. In 1888 (when Lever moved his soap making factory to the nearby site of Port Sunlight), his family moved into the nearby Thornton Manor. Over the following 25 years Lever expanded Thornton Hough to provide housing for family, estate workers and company staff. Thornton Hough is now an Area of Special Landscape Value, a protective designation to preserve its character and appearance.

Keep straight ahead over the next side road (St George's Way) and, just a few paces, later turn left onto the public footpath signed to Brimstage. Pass alongside the vehicle barrier and follow the track with the village school on the left.

Keep ahead on the track which passes between outbuildings and then continue as the track narrows to become a tarmac lane between hedgerows. At the T-junction turn right and, a short distance later (immediately before the gateway), turn left to leave the lane and join the footpath signed to Brimstage.

Follow this narrow path between tall hedgerows with open fields both sides. The path leads you to a gate. Go through this and then keep ahead on the path which runs along the right-hand edge of a crop field. In the field corner, pass through the next gate and keep ahead along the path (now with a hedge on the left). Where the hedge on the left ends, continue ahead to pass through the centre of a crop field. At the end of this field, a pair of old wrought iron kissing gates lead you across a beautiful avenue of sycamore trees.

2 → 3 Tree Avenue to Brimstage Hall



In the next large open field (which may be holding cattle), the path continues at about 1 o'clock. Take a moment to look over to the left and you'll see the beautiful old buildings of Thornton Manor, the former home of the Viscounts Leverhulme. Over three generations the Manor became a major focal point within the Wirral, regularly welcoming the Queen Mother, celebrities from the stage and television, government officials and CEOs of major institutions. Following the death of the third viscount in 2000, the manor was sold and is today run as a wedding and conference facility.

At the far side of the field, pass through the gate and continue along the path which follows a fence on the right. The path leads you to the next gate. Pass through this and keep ahead along the enclosed tree-lined path (ignoring the path to the right). There are some beautiful old twisted oak trees along this stretch. Eventually you will emerge alongside a wide metal gate to reach a road.

Turn right along the pavement for a short distance to reach the T-junction. Turn right again to follow the pavement alongside Brimstage Road (signed for Brimstage Hall and Craft Centre). Where the road swings left, turn right (in between the two chevron signs) to join Footpath 25.

To the right of this path is a large crop field of maize or sweetcorn. Depending on the time of year you may be looking at short dead stumps of the crop or a tall green forest. Either way you should be able to see a number of raised wooden walkways within the field. The field is used every year to create intricate patterns of paths through the crop, A Maize Maze, as a family adventure. The raised walkways are an essential way for the lost souls within the maize to plan their escape route!

You will emerge via a stile into the car park for Brimstage Hall and Courtyard. Cross the car park and keep straight ahead with large red stone converted barns on the right and a paddock on the left. On the right you will come to the entrance for the hall and courtyard. Brimstage Hall is one of the oldest buildings on Merseyside, said to have been built between 1175 and 1350. Why it was built and for whom is not known, but today it is managed by English Heritage and houses a range of craft shops. Take time to explore should you wish.

3 → 4 Brimstage Hall to Track Crossroads

Follow the access drive as it bends left to reach the T-junction with the main village road. Turn right along the pavement and follow this until it ends. Keep ahead along the grass verge for just a few more paces and then turn right onto the public footpath signed to Thornton Hough. Pass through the gate into the field (this one may be holding cattle) and go straight ahead following the right-hand edge of the field.

Keep directly ahead with the hedge on the right and a stile will lead you out to a small access track. Cross the track, take the stile opposite and then bear slightly left to reach the next gate (in the top left-hand corner of the field). This gate leads you into the corner of a crop field. Keep straight ahead, with the hedge on the left. At the end of this first crop field, follow the path which dog-



legs left then right to continue with the hedge now on the right.

In the field corner pass through the remains of an iron kissing gate and you will emerge into the tree-lined avenue which you crossed earlier on the walk. This is one of the many impressive avenues within the Leverhulme Estate. The avenues are not public rights of way, so please stay on the public footpaths by following these instructions carefully.

Cross straight over the avenue and take the path ahead through the centre of a large crop field. At the far end you will emerge to a T-junction with a pretty enclosed path between hedgerows. Turn left along this. The path swings right and merges with a wider track coming in from the right. A few paces later another track merges in (this time from the left). A short distance later you will reach a crossroads of tracks.



Track Crossroads to End



Take the main track directly ahead (ignoring the narrower path just to the right of this which leads into trees). The track soon swings right and then continues between hedgerows. Pass alongside the metal gate and ignore the footpath to the left, instead continue a few more paces and then take the footpath signed to the right. Pass through the wooden kissing gate and follow the path along the left-hand edge of the large crop field.

Stay on this path through a couple of fields, following the course of the power lines. Where the power lines end keep straight ahead across the centre of the crop field and then continue with the boundaries for private gardens running on the left. In the field corner, pass through the wooden gate to reach a small access drive. Turn left along this and you will emerge to a T-junction with the road.

Cross over the road with care to reach the pavement opposite and turn right along this. The pavement leads you past North Lodge and back into the village of Thornton Hough. On the right you will soon come to St George's Church that you passed on the outward journey. From this point you will be retracing your steps back to the pub. Swap to the right-hand pavement when it is safe to do so and then follow the pavement ahead through the village. The pavement eventually swings left, with the village green across to the left. Follow the road for about 0.5 miles to reach the Red Fox on the right for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

