

## **THE BISHOP LANGTON TRAIL SECTION 1 – LANGTON-BY-WRAGBY TO APLEY.**

Start : Langton-by-Wragby church. (St Giles.) (GR149768)

Distance : 4 miles : 6.5 kilometres.

Finish : Thistle Storr Wood. (GR119754)

Refreshments : None on route.

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NOTES. Verge parking is possible along Church Lane at Langton and at the entrance to Thistle Storr Wood. Langton's bus stop is on A158 near the end of Church Lane.

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### **INTRODUCTION.**

The first section of the trail takes us from Bishop Langton's birthplace through the Lincolnshire Limewoods Nature Reserve.

Before setting out however take time to visit Langton-by-Wragby church. St Giles has a mediaeval tower with its weathered west doorway showing several fossils. The rest however is Victorian from a rebuild in 1866. Set within the south aisle is a memorial stained glass window to Bishop Stephen Langton. Interestingly the list of incumbents for St Giles begins in 1215, the year of Magna Carta. Another memorial, of a more recent event, is the churchyard gate for Edward VII's coronation in 1902.

Nearby is Langton Manor romantically set within its moat. The present building dates from 1841 but stands on the site of earlier manor houses and may occupy the site of Stephen Langton's birthplace. The surrounding fields (either side of the road by the information board) show traces of the mediaeval Langton village and ridge and furrow fields.

Near Wragby our walk crosses the former Louth to Bardney branch railway line. This was opened by the Louth and Lincoln Railway Company in 1876 but was soon taken over by the Great Northern Railway. Passenger services ceased in November 1951 and it closed in February 1960 when goods trains ceased.

Our route towards Apley is now crosses part of the Lincolnshire Limewoods. This area located in a rough triangle between Bardney, Woodhall Spa and Wragby is known to have been indigenous woodland since before the time of the Domesday Book when extensive forests were mentioned. The natural woodland has been much depleted over the centuries but nevertheless considerable areas remain. They are especially important because of their concentration of small-leaved limes – a threatened species - and in 1997 nine local woods were designated as a National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest. Various conservationist bodies are now involved in protecting and enhancing the remaining woodlands with wildlife preservation schemes (the re-introduction of micro-chipped dormice at Chamber's Farm Wood for example) and creation of new wildlife corridors.

Along with the other limewoods Thistle Storr Wood is a remnant of this historically much larger woodland. The derivation of its unusual name is uncertain but may come from the Old Norse “stord” meaning “brushwood”.

## **ROUTE GUIDE.**

1. Face the church and turn left following the road round to the right until opposite the Manor House and its moat. At the village information board take the track on the left. Sixty yards after entering Ash Holt turn right at the waymark onto a grass track over an arable field and at another waymark turn left behind a hedge to reach a farm track.

2. Turn right here and when the track goes left (there's a footpath sign) keep ahead on a path through trees and across a footbridge; then bear left downhill past Badgermoor Wood to reach a copse, a footbridge and then a kissing gate. From this go diagonally right across a meadow to its far corner where there's another kissing gate and cross the old railway to a path junction. Now turn left along a field edge path by a stream to reach a road.

3. Keep ahead for a third of a mile crossing to the safer, wider verge on the opposite side when convenient. Just after Little Langley house (GR133764) there is a footpath fingerpost (though it has no “finger”!!) on the left-hand side of the road but pointing right.

4. Go through the farm gate and follow the track for 200 yards. At a waymark bear right (the path should be marked in any crops) aiming just right of a green barn where another waymark guides you through a copse. In the open field beyond veer left, staying parallel with some electricity poles, to come alongside more woods. Keeping forward cross a farm road aiming towards a waymark seen in a hedge gap ahead.

5. From it bear left over rough grass to a waymark by a double electricity pole, pass under the wires and go slightly right for 100 yards to a footpath sign and footbridge. Keep left on a wide grass track, bending first left then right, and at an open grass area keep left to reach another footbridge. There is now a clear path to a footpath sign beside Thistle Storr Wood. Keep right beside a wire fence bordering the woodland to reach a footbridge, a handgate and a 4-way footpath sign.

6. [THERE ARE NOW TWO OPTIONS.]

(A) (TO COMPLETE SECTION 1 ONLY.) Turn left along the field edge, still by the woods, and from a gate in a hedge keep forward in the second field. At its far corner pass a pond to a footbridge and the Thistle Storr Wood parking area.

(B) (IF CONTINUING ONTO SECTION 2.) You should keep ahead towards Apley with a hedge on your right towards the far end of the field. [Now see Section 2.]

## **THE BISHOP LANGTON TRAIL SECTION 2 – APLEY TO FISKERTON.**

Start : Thistle Storr Wood near Apley. (GR119754)

Distance : 6¼ miles : 10.00 kilometres

Finish : Carpenter's Arms, Fiskerton. (GR050720)

Refreshments : Carpenter's Arms.

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NOTES. There is a small parking area at the entrance to Thistle Storr Wood. Walkers doing Section 2 with two cars may park at the Carpenter's Arms.

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### **INTRODUCTION.**

On Section 2 we leave the Limewoods area and head for the valley of the River Witham.

The Lincolnshire Limewoods contain the greatest number of small-leaved lime trees (*Tilia cordata*) in England and were declared a National Nature Reserve in 1997; the present day distribution of woodland species there are believed to be similar to that prevailing 5 – 8,000 years ago. Amongst other conservation programmes the Woodland Trust is presently undertaking experimental work to clone new small-leaved lime trees and further increase the population of these rare trees.

At Apley look out for the small St Andrew's mortuary chapel. An earlier church was in ruins by around 1800 and was only replaced by the present building in 1871 at a cost of £284. Note that the quoins (corners) are brick on one side and stone on the other.

On our way to Barlings abbey we pass Hardy Gang Wood. There are legends of a "Wild Man of Stainfield" who lived hereabouts and survived partly by killing local livestock. In one version he was himself killed in the wood by the "Hardy Gang" of local farmers. Another derivation for the wood's name is from the Old Norse word "haga-ganga" denoting an area for grazing.

Near Hardy Gang Wood, our route joins and follows the Viking Way the 147 mile long National Trail between Barton-on-Humber and Oakham in Rutland that was established in 1976. Watch for the distinctive Viking helmet waymarks.

We then shortly come to Barlings Abbey where the grounds with their earthworks and remains of fishpond are open access. The Witham valley is famous for its concentration of abbey sites. In mediaeval times the marshy terrain here, though crucially it still had river access, was ideal for religious communities to achieve isolation but also have a good trade route (via Boston to the continent) for wool, their primary source of income. Barlings was established by Premonstratensian monks (a French order) around 1154 and survived until the Dissolution. The abbot here was hanged for his part in the

1536 Lincolnshire Rising. Only part of the north arcade to the nave remains standing.

A couple of miles further on modern technology intrudes into the landscape in the shape of the Fiskerton oil wells. These are situated on the former RAF Fiskerton airfield and plainly visible from the Viking Way. Oil was discovered here in 1997 and production began the following year. The “Nodding Donkeys” extract the oil, which is then pumped to a collecting facility at Welton.

The WWII airfield opened in 1943 and boasted a curious experimental system known by the acronym FIDO – Fog Investigation Dispersal Operation. This consisted of a system of pipes beside the runways through which thousands of gallons of petrol could be pumped every minute, which when burnt off, hopefully evaporated any fog! One of the last bombing operations from Fiskerton was on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1945 to attack Berchtesgarden, Hitler’s “Eagle’s Nest” hideaway in the Alps. The airfield closed once the war ended.

On the optional route Five Mile Bridge spans the river where there was once a ferry – hence the two opposing “No Through Roads” on either bank. The south bank once carried the “Lincolnshire Loop Line” that opened in 1848. This was the Great Northern Railway’s original line from London to the north via Boston and Lincoln There was formerly a bargeman’s inn here, Five Mile House, so named because of its distance from Lincoln, which became a railway station. The footbridge was installed in 1957.

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## **ROUTE GUIDE.**

(The first quarter of a mile retraces the end of Section 1.)

1. Facing into the woods turn left over a footbridge, pass a pond and follow the right-hand edge of a meadow. In the second field walk to a four-way footpath sign and turn left along the field edge with a hedge on your right. Beyond a footbridge at the field corner continue on a marked path over an arable field towards a distant house.
2. On reaching a lane turn left and then bear right at a “T” junction into Apley. Note the community seat opposite the churchyard. Keep ahead past the church for about a mile until the road bends left near Hardy Gang Wood. (GR096746) Here there is a bridle gate and a Viking Way Waymark.
3. Cross the meadow (ignoring the bridle gate on your right) and join a track at the far side of the field. Follow this until you come to a footbridge and enter the grounds of Barlings Abbey. Keep forward past the abbey ruins and nearby farm to a kissing gate at the far right-hand corner of the site; then join a lane and turn right.
4. After 200 yards go left at the Viking Way marker along a grass track and then a headland path by a hedge – continuing until you reach a footbridge. Cross this and then bear very slightly right over an arable field aiming towards a gap in trees and a 3-way footpath sign at the far side. Ignore the path

heading left but go through the gap onto a wide grass track with a hedge on your left. Walk on to another footbridge and then to a 3-way fingerpost; now bear right then left. walk ahead past three more 3-way fingerposts as the route becomes enclosed and swings left past the oilfield and Fiskerton airfield. Eventually join Hall Lane, Fiskerton and keep forward to the junction with the main road.

5. The main route now goes right through Fiskerton village bearing left at a “Y” junction to finish at the Carpenter’s Arms.

[FOR THOSE WISHING TO CONTINUE ONTO SECTION 3 WITHOUT VISITING THE INN AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FROM HALL LANE OMITTS FISKERTON VILLAGE.]

6. Turn left for 200 yards (using the pavement!) then cross into the lane opposite and walk down to Five Mile Bridge. DO NOT take the footpath signed by the North Delph but turn right along the one actually on the river embankment - though it’s worth going onto the bridge first for the view to Lincoln cathedral – our ultimate destination.

In half a mile the main route joins from a footbridge below on your right. [Keep ahead here then follow from (\*) in Section 3.]

## **THE BISHOP LANGTON TRAIL SECTION 3 – FISKERTON TO LINCOLN**

Start : Carpenter's Arms, Fiskerton. (GR050720)

Distance : 6¼ miles : 10.00 kilometres.

Finish : Castle Square, Lincoln. (GR976718)

Refreshments : Carpenter's Arms, Fiskerton.

A wide choice of inns and cafés in Lincoln.

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NOTES. Walkers may park at the Carpenter's Arms.

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### **INTRODUCTION.**

The final section of the trail first takes us on a delightful riverside walk, via Greetwell and then through the city's Arboretum before climbing to the historic Cathedral Quarter of Lincoln and finishing outside the castle with its new Magna Carta visitor centre.

Through geological, pre-historic and even historic times the River Witham near Fiskerton was an indeterminate watercourse of winding swampy channels. It was first straightened and embanked in 1812 and over the years many archaeological finds have been made including a causeway of buried wooden posts found in 2001 that has been dated to around 4500BC. Many finds of weapons, jewellery and tools, including some Roman artefacts, have been made and these may have been votive religious offerings to the "Gods". There were numerous dug-out boats discovered too. (Local tradition is that these were common enough to burn on the village inn fire.) A reconstruction of the "causeway", along with many of the finds, can be seen at "The Collection" museum in Lincoln.

On the far bank is the Water Rail Way, along distance walking/cycle trail between Lincoln and Boston.

On leaving the river we come to Greetwell. As we climb the track up to the Hall and church there is evidence on either side of the site of the former mediaeval village. This was recorded in the Domesday Book along with a fishery and a mill. The population appears to have been around 80 – 100. The Hall itself, most likely Jacobean (C17th) in origin has had C18th and C19th additions. The adjacent church, All Saints, is largely Norman and along with a priest is also mentioned in the Domesday Book, but it was heavily restored (so it looks much newer) in 1899.

Just after Greetwell we find ourselves beside the railway from Lincoln to Barnetby Junction. This route was built by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway Company (itself an amalgamation of three other minor railway companies) and opened in December 1848 to link the midlands with New Holland and the Humber ferries.

Once in Lincoln we pass through the Arboretum, the city's urban park opened in 1882 and extended in 1894. From the lime tree avenue of the upper Long Terrace there are views down to an ornate bandstand (1884) and over pools, fountains and a maze. An invitation to dally perhaps before the final half mile to the castle?

We enter historic Lincoln and the Cathedral Close past the Pottergate, once part of the enclosing wall and dating from the C14th - though restored in the 1880's. To the left is the Bishop's Palace (English Heritage) and the Deanery and then the awe inspiring west front of the cathedral.

The cathedral's early history included vicissitudes such as fire (1141) and earthquake (1185), which was followed by Bishop Hugh's rebuilding. Today a visit to this, one of England's grandest religious buildings, remains a richly rewarding experience. Particularly noteworthy are the cloisters, with the Wren library above, the imposing chapter house and the Dean's Eye window dating from the 1220's in the north transept. Although restored in 2006 this still retains 85% of its original glass. And of course we must not forget the famous "Lincoln Imp" in the Angel Choir, the symbol of both the cathedral and the city. And another attraction for visitors in recent years has been the peregrines nesting on the south transept.

Facing the west front is a curved terrace of houses known as the "Number Houses" - so named since they were the first in the city to have street numbers. The trail then ends by passing through the C14th Exchequer Gate onto Castle Hill.

William the "Conqueror" completed a castle at Lincoln in 1068 having evicted 166 Saxon households to make way for it. It has been altered and added to over the intervening centuries, particularly in the C12th and C13th. It has always, at least partially, been a prison and a 1787 gaol with an 1846 extension survives today along with its chapel and tiers of claustrophobic individual cell-like pews. At the west end of the bailey is the Shire Hall (1826) now the Assize Courts.

The castle also houses Lincoln's copy of the Magna Carta now accommodated in its brand new visitor centre.

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## **ROUTE GUIDE.**

1. From the inn carpark turn left and in 100 yards go left again into Nelson Road. At the end a footpath sign indicates an enclosed path on the right. This soon bears left to a footbridge after which go right along a fenced path to another footbridge and climb onto the Witham embankment. Turn right. [The alternative option to Section 2 joins here.]

2. (\*) Follow for the embankment for two miles passing through two bridle gates. At a third gate the Viking Way goes off to the right but we continue by the river for another quarter of a mile to a pumping station and 3-way

fingerpost. Turn right here over a bridge and follow a track that swings right uphill to Greetwell church and hall.

3. Just beyond the hall bear left on grass, crossing the earthworks of part of the deserted mediaeval village, to meet a fence near a house garden. Turn left alongside this to a kissing gate and in the next field follow the grass headland to a short fenced path leading to a kissing gate at a railway crossing. Go over (carefully!) and turn left, then right at the field corner. After 30 yards go up the steps on your left and join a road.

4. Bear right and first left (Crofton Road) to reach a junction with a main road. Cross into Tower Drive – slightly to your left - and at its end, where it becomes Roman Pavement, take the wide path ahead. Beyond the hospital grounds the path becomes narrower and walled continuing until it meets another road. (Milman Road) Cross over and take the gravel path (just to your right) into the arboretum.

5. Walk along the wide Long Terrace to the fountain at its far end and then bear right, up steps, to exit onto a road. (Lindum Terrace) Turn left then take the first right (Upper Lindum Street) and at the top cross the road (Wragby Road) by the pedestrian crossing and go left. Turn right up Pottergate before bearing left beside the cathedral to reach its west front. Finally go through the Exchequer Gate to complete the trail on Castle Hill.