

# Swinton Heritage Walk

## *'Traces of Industry'*



**Walk summary:** A walk around the town of Swinton taking in the remains of the pottery industry, historic buildings and canals, and the memorial to a World War II Victoria Cross recipient.

**Distance:** 4 miles / 6.4 kilometres

**Duration:** approximately 1.45 hours not including stops

**Terrain:** Woodland paths and urban walking

**Nearest Car Park:** On street parking around the Swinton Locks area – please park considerately.

## **1. Swinton Locks**

**Start at Swinton Locks. Follow the path at the site of the boat yard with the new housing estate on your right. Go under the railway bridge onto Carlisle Street.**

**At the junction of Carlisle Street with Fitzwilliam Street, cross Fitzwilliam Street and take the footpath straight ahead that forks to the right. Follow the path as it crosses Piccadilly Road and into Creighton Woods.**

As you follow the path up through Creighton Woods you will see the earth works that form part of a structure known as “Roman Ridge”. This feat of engineering was in fact built between 450 and 600 AD in order to defend the Celtic kingdom of Elmet from the advancing Anglo-Saxons

**Exit Creighton Woods via the lych gates, cross Warren Vale, turn right to the roundabout and turn left onto Blackamoor Road. Cross the road and walk to “Pottery Pond”.**

## **2. Rockingham Pottery**

This is the site of the Rockingham Pottery, well known around the world in its day, and there is a surviving kiln – the Waterloo Kiln - built in 1815, the year of the battle of Waterloo. The small cottage and the pond also formed parts of the pottery, but most of the buildings no longer exist. The Ordnance Survey map of the area published around 1850 records the outlines of the buildings, but they were already in ruins at the time.



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**On leaving Pottery Pond, go back to the roundabout and cross to go down Rockingham Road.**

This was known as Pottery Lane in 1850 and had fields on both sides. A hoard of 300-400 silver denarii was found in 1853 beneath the building which is now the happy village Chinese takeaway, during excavations to create a cellar. The Coins included examples of Nero, Galba, Vespasian, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Sabina, Antoninus Pius, Faustine I, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Severus, Julia Domna, Geta, Caracalla, and Plautilla, (AD 54-217). More recently, in 2014, a significant number of high status as well as domestic Roman pottery fragments as well as a field boundary ditch were found during excavations on Toll Bar Road. Metal detecting in the area has also uncovered numerous Roman finds, including brooches as well as coins dating back to the early 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. Carry on past **The Kings Head** – there has been a pub on this site called The Kings Head since 1781, but the building you see was built in 1860/1.

### **3. St Margaret's Church**

**Continue down the hill into Church Street to St Margaret's Church**

The first place of worship in Swinton was a Norman chapel of ease to Wath church, built in about 1200 AD on the site of the present church hall. The small chapel was dedicated to St Mary Magdalene and was finally pulled down in 1815 before the construction of the new church. The two Norman arches were preserved and moved to the new churchyard when the Victorian church was consecrated in 1817. This church of St Margaret was destroyed by a fire in 1897, although the tower survived. The body of the new church was built around the tower, using stone from

local quarries at Mexborough, Darfield and Hooton Roberts. The church was consecrated by the Archbishop of York in October 1899. In the church yard there are a number of graves that belong to locally important and famous people. Among the graves in the church yard are those of John Green, founder of the Don Pottery, the Brameld family, founders of the Rockingham Pottery, Alfred Liversidge, Harry Crossley and PC John Kew who was killed in action, being shot twice by the Backhouse brothers after responding to a call in which he was told the brothers had a loaded revolver.

Swinton war memorial is located within the churchyard of St Margaret's Church. The memorial was unveiled on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1921 by Earl Fitzwilliam and was dedicated by the Bishop of Sheffield. Originally the memorial was to be unveiled in June 1921, however due to problems at the local colliery this was postponed to the aforementioned date. Costing over £1300 to build the money was raised by public sponsors. Earl Fitzwilliam kindly donated the land on which the memorial was built. The memorial was designed by the architect Sir Reginald Blomfield and built by Messrs Tyas and Guest.

The memorial contains the names of 203 soldiers lost during the 1<sup>st</sup> world war and a further 48 lost during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Those names include Thomas Norman Jackson who was awarded the Victoria cross.

An extract from the London Gazette 27 November 1918 describes why Thomas was awarded the Victoria Cross:

*“20810 Lance Corporal Thomas Norman JACKSON, 1st Bn  
Coldstream Guards*

*For most conspicuous bravery and self sacrifice in the attack across  
the Canal du Nord, near Graincourt.*

*On the morning of 27 September 1918, Lance-Corporal Jackson was the first to volunteer to follow Captain [C.H. Frisby](#) across the Canal du Nord in his rush against an enemy machine-gun post. With two comrades he followed his officer across the canal, rushed the post, capturing two machine-guns, and so enabled the companies to advance. Later in the morning, Lance Corporal Jackson was the first to jump into a German trench which his platoon had to clear, and after doing further excellent work was unfortunately killed.*

*Throughout the day this NCO showed the greatest valour and devotion to duty, and set an inspiring example to all.”*

#### 4. Fitzwilliam Street

**Leaving the church, cross Church Street to Fitzwilliam Street (opposite the church gates).**

On this road you can see the old doorway and brickwork of the Gaping Goose pub, known locally as Swan With Two Necks. The pub had operated as a coaching inn for several years, and was the oldest pub in Swinton. After its closure around the time of the First World War the building became the home of John Kemp.

At the junction with Milton Street (joining from the left) is the Travellers Rest pub. The Travellers Rest was mentioned in the trial of Charles Peace who was a burglar and murderer, who embarked on a life of crime after being maimed in an industrial accident when a boy. After killing a policeman in Manchester, he fled to his home-town of Sheffield, where he became obsessed with his neighbour's wife and shot the husband dead. Settling in London, he carried out multiple burglaries before being caught in the prosperous suburb of Blackheath, wounding the policeman who arrested him. He was linked to the Sheffield murder, and tried at Leeds Assizes. Found guilty, he was hanged at Armley Prison. It is believed that he sold his illegal goods at the pub.

Fitzwilliam Street is where many impressive houses were built when Swinton was growing from a village in to an industrial town. Buildings of note include Swinton House at number 20, and further along is Swinton Hall. Mirfield Cottage at number 44 Fitzwilliam Street is the oldest residence in Swinton. Records date it to around 1592, although it is thought to date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was originally the living quarters of a farm and was a house with a barn attached. The rural farm has now been taken over by the urban spread of Swinton, showing just how much impact industry had on the local area.

**Backtrack along Fitzwilliam Street, then turn right into Slade Road, and straight on to Temperance Street. On reaching Station Street, turn left towards Queen Street on the opposite side.**

#### 5. The Crossley Brothers

Here there is a plaque to the Crossley brothers who were heavyweight boxers from Mexborough. Herbert Crossley sadly died in 1921 from septicaemia whilst travelling to America for a fight. However his younger brother Harry had a much more successful career which spanned the years 1924-1935. Harry was perhaps spotted during an exhibition event organised by local promoter William Bridgewater in early 1924 as he took the young man into his stable. He was British light heavyweight champion between 1929 and 1932. He retired from boxing in March 1934. Crossley married Eva Williams of Leicester on 8 January 1935. He became the licensee of the Broadway Hotel in Leicester. He died in a Leicester hospital in 1948, aged 44, after a two-year illness. He was buried in the churchyard at Swinton, close to his former home of Mexborough.

Turn back along Station Road and head in the direction of the station, on the right hand side there is the town's cross. This was issued by King John in the 1300s and granted Swinton the right to hold a market.

On the street corner with Temperance Street is a plaque to Arthur Morris who is the grandfather of Mary Poppins and Hollywood star Julie Andrews. Arthur was a Swinton resident and pit deputy before becoming a celebrity of his day after writing and selling poems which received the royal seal of approval after being recognised by the king. He became known as the pitman's poet. He toured clubs performing monologues while his daughter Barbara played the piano. Barbara went on to have a very famous daughter Julie Andrews.

## **6. The Masonic Lodge**

A rather large and imposing building contains the Swinton Masonic Lodges. The first lodge, the Rockingham Lodge, was founded by Mr S C Ward, the first Worshipful Master. The building which was used for this purpose were previously owned and occupied by the local Swinton council. During 1931, founded by Dr Sidney O Hatherley, the gothic lodge was added. A third lodge, the fairway lodge, was added at a later date, all of which still exist within the building today.

## **7. Carnegie Library**

Between 1883 and 1929 over 2,509 Carnegie Libraries were built using money donated by the Scottish American philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. The building you see today was built at a cost of £3000 and was opened on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1906 by Sir William Holland MP. When first opened the library contained just short of 500 books which by 1953 had been increased to well over 6000. The library would not have been built if it was not for the request by the town Clark, Mr F L Harrop asking for assistance in procuring a free library for Swinton. Today the library has been converted into flats.

## **8. Swinton Station**

There have been three train stations at Swinton, the first of which opened in 1840 built by the North Midland Railway. This was replaced by a second station that is still standing on the other side of the road next to the railway bridge. This station became known as Swinton Town to distinguish it from Swinton Central on the former Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway line. It was served by stopping trains from Sheffield Midland to York and to Leeds City via Cudworth. The station closed in January 1968 with the rationalisation of local rail services in South Yorkshire. Then late 1980s it was recognised that the railways around South Yorkshire had been cut back too much and a new station was built and opened in 1990

A plaque mounted on 'The Station' pub commemorates Alfred Liversidge, a local sporting hero. Alfred was born in 1836 and he spent his childhood in the village of Swinton. From an early age, his sporting prowess emerged. He distinguished himself as an athlete, being uncatchable at running and achieving the almost impossible at jumping. He was only one of a tiny number of people to be capable of leaping the canal lock at Swinton Bridge from one side to the other. During his adult life, especially during the 1850's, Alfred was recognised as England's fastest man as a runner. He

entered and won the U.K. Half-Mile Championship, the Quarter-Mile Sheffield Handicap, the Half-Mile Royal Handicap at Leeds and obviously developing his canal jumping talents, the Manchester Long Jump Championship. In 1860, Alfred found himself in the city of Norwich. His sporting success ensured that his fame was known by the people of that city. He was introduced to a young publican who had just taken the British Middleweight Boxing Title – Jem Mace. Alfred became Mace's trainer and his boxing career took off from there. Unlike some of today's boxing trainers, managers and promoters, Alfred never made huge amounts of money from his sporting activities. When he returned to Swinton, he had to return to a life of normality which meant obtaining a job to provide for himself and his family. Following in his father's footsteps Alfred obtained employment in the pottery industry at Holmes Pottery in Rotherham. He died on the 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1921 and his funeral set off from his final home, 58 Middleton Villas, Swinton. He was interred in Swinton churchyard, where his gravestone can be seen quite clearly today.

### **9. The Dearne & Dove Canal**

**Carry on down Station Street, under the railway line and over the canal Bridge. Turn left on the footpath to the canal**

Here you can see the last remaining section of the Dearne & Dove Canal. The Dearne & Dove Canal was opened in 1798 and was designed to link the River Don Navigation to Barnsley. The canal went out of use for boats in the 1970s and is now partly used as Waddingtons Boat Yard.

**Return via the same route and cross Bridge Street into Dun Street. At the end of Dun Street turn left onto Coronation Road**

To your right you can see the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation. You might want to go into Coronation Park to take a closer look. This canal was built to connect Sheffield to the River Trent and also linked onto the Dearne & Dove Navigation, which you saw previously. It is from these canals that raw goods would be brought into Swinton and finished goods be taken back out to markets around South Yorkshire and beyond.

**At the end of the road turn left into New Station Street.**

The elegant architecture of the terraced houses suggests that New Station Street is not as new as the name implies. **Turn right into Rowms Lane** and cross the road to view the very substantial building that used to be Swinton School and has more recently been converted to a range of business units.

### **10. The Don Pottery**

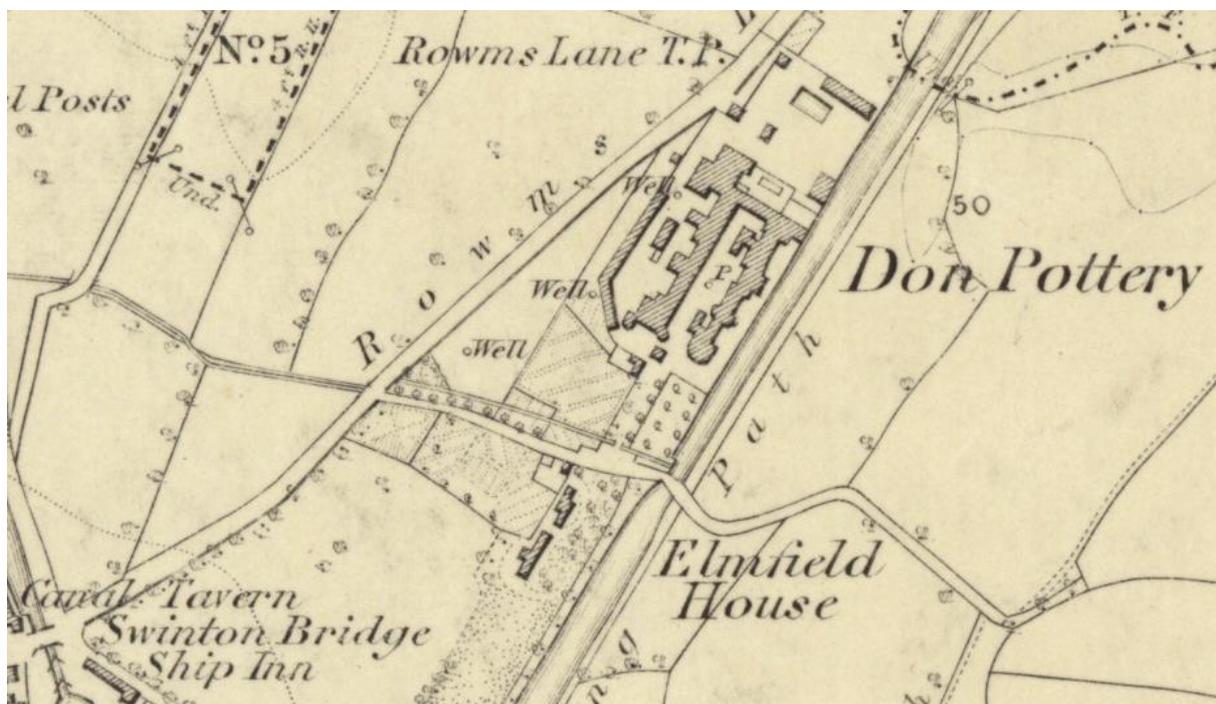
**Heading back on yourself, re-cross Rowms Lane and turn left into Talbot Street.**

Don Pottery opened on a site adjacent to the canal (on your left) in 1801 and remained one of Swinton's major employers until 1893. John and William Green owned the Don

Pottery, and around 1810 they experimented with porcelain, resulting in the production of some highly successful pieces, which are extremely rare. Don Pottery was exported to the Middle East, Russia, and South America.

Business declined in the 1830s and the Greens were declared bankrupt in 1834 and the pottery advertised for sale. Many moulds and patterns were purchased by other local potteries and re-used. Page | 7

In 1839, Samuel Barker who owned the Mexborough Pottery, purchased Don Pottery, and both were run by him until 1848 when production was centred on the Don Pottery site. In 1882, it was rented out to other partners, although it still traded as Samuel Barker & Sons. The pottery closed in 1893 when all the stock was sold to pay overdue rent.



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**Cross the canal via the bridge and take the stairs on the right that leads back to the Don Valley Way trail.**