

Rothwell Haig & John O'Gaunts

A relatively easy 3.5 mile walk with no stiles or big hills on rural paths, tracks and town ginnels, with extensive panoramas.

Start Point: Car Park opposite Trinity Church, Church Street, Rothwell.

Rothwell is part of the Rhubarb Triangle and is mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book ("Rodewelle"). It has a long history and was once the site of a royal hunting lodge (at Rothwell Castle, off Wood Lane). One of the lodge's documented owners was John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster, who is supposed to have killed the last wild boar in England while hunting nearby, hence a boar's head formed part of the arms of the former Rothwell Urban District Council. The parish church (Church Street) is dedicated to Holy Trinity and is on the site of an Anglo Saxon predecessor. The current church, which has a ring of eight bells, is of medieval origins but was substantially rebuilt in the 19th Century: the tower retains medieval fabric believed to be from the 15th century. Famous persons from Rothwell include the scientist Joseph Priestley. His name is still associated with Rothwell, in the name of the local Joseph Priestley College. Rothwell has a long history of coal mining. It was a site of early mining, using a system known as Bell Pits. Coal mining has been carried out in the area for over 600 years, though coal production stopped on 9 December 1983. There were many local pits including the Fanny, the Rose, and Rothwell Water Haigh. In 1995, Leeds City Council and Leeds Groundwork formed a partnership which, together with local residents and community groups, transformed the former colliery into a 50 hectare country park.



From the top left hand corner of the car park, take the footpath following a stream on your left into Rothwell Pastures, passing an interpretation board on your right. Shortly, the scant remains of Rothwell Castle are visible over the fence on the right. After the castle remains, continue along the path as it winds its way around grassland to eventually turn left over a metal footbridge. Continue on to another wooden bridge and turn immediately right to follow the course of a stream on your right. Head towards a large weeping willow tree where you turn left and then right. At this point, ignore the footpath to the right by an interpretation board and continue up to the main path with houses above you on the left. On reaching a metal barrier turn right to walk along the road.

Continue a short way past houses and just prior to a bus stop; take the first track to the right to follow it for about 200 yards then turn left at a public footpath sign along a wide un-surfaced track between fields. Follow this track for about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile and as you reach houses, cross over a road and continue straight forward. At the next street, this is Northfield Place, cross over to follow a path by bollards to arrive at a disused railway line.

Robin Hood, Rothwell, Stourton Railway: The East & West Yorkshire Union Railway (E&WYUR), sponsored by the owners of Newmarket Colliery, originally planned to build a 30 mile line for coal traffic from Lofthouse to Drax. Lack of funds, however, resulted in a much shorter line between Lofthouse and Rothwell. It became a through route in 1895 when the South Leeds Junction Railway connected Rothwell to the Midland at Stourton. In 1898 a workmen's service was introduced on the Newmarket branch under a light railway order but an attempt to operate a public service into Leeds in 1904 from Robin Hood and Rothwell proved to be a disaster and it only lasted nine months; passengers preferred the electric trams linking Leeds and Wakefield that followed a similar route.



On reaching the disused railway, turn right to follow a wide track, behind houses, ignoring a path off to the left and to the right. Follow the 'Rothwell Greenway' and after 100 yards as the track bears to the right, take the far left of two left hand paths up to a metal barrier at the side of a play area. Continue through the barrier to take a well defined path behind houses and at the end, continue forward across the bottom of a field (do NOT turn left behind the houses to follow the public footpath sign). At the end of the first field as the track bears right, continue straight ahead to follow another path along the bottom of the second field. As the path bears left, take a right fork on to another path by a gate and within a few yards, turn left to follow a clear path down the side of a field with an old hedge on your right. At the bottom of the field, as the main track bears left, turn right and immediately left between barred wire fencing into a small wood. Follow this narrow path through the wood up to a metal barrier by houses and on to a street.

Continue up the street to the main road (Wood Lane) and cross diagonally right across the road to a hedged track by a bridleway sign (Mill Pit Lane). At the next street, cross directly over to continue along the footpath. Your route is now as straight as a die, for around ¾ of a mile, all the way to Leeds Road, sometimes as a path, sometimes as a track and in one place a small narrow road. Over to your left you now have vast views towards the City of Leeds and beyond, as well as fine distant views of Temple Newsam House.

On reaching the road, turn right passing Manheim Car Auctions continuing over the next road, which leads into an industrial estate and opposite the Dewan Indian Restaurant (ex John O'Gaunts Pub), turn right down a tarmac footpath behind an office block and then alongside a large car park. At a metal barrier, cross over the road continuing down the tarmac path to emerge into a street which you follow to the main road. Cross over the road and turn right going over Orchard Way and immediately after the next detached red brick house, turn left down a tarmac ginnel and shortly after passing a school on the right, you will arrive at a narrow street.

Keep forward downhill, ignoring Churchfield Road on the right and St. Christopher's Road on the left to turn next right along Gillet Drive. As the road bends to the right, continue straight forward and at the next street, cross over and into the churchyard to follow the path down to the main entrance to the church; leaving by the lych-gate with the White Swan to your left. Cross the road and back to your start point in the small car park opposite.