

Stainforth - Hatfield Colliery Trail

Walk summary: This is an urban trail exploring the mining heritage of the village of Stainforth and its historical links to the River Don. It includes passing the pit head of Hatfield Colliery, the memorial wheel and finishes with a walk along the canal to the historic coal wharf.

Distance: 4.1 miles / 6.6 Kilometres

Duration: Approximately 1 hour 45 minutes

Terrain: An urban trail following the heritage of Stainforth with a particular focus on the mining heritage of the area. It also includes a section along the Stainforth and Keadby Canal, several local parks and passing through some farmland. The route is mostly paved with a section along a dirt tow path of the canal and there are multiple road crossings.

Nearest Car Park: Free parking can be found on Silver Street, DN7 5AH.



1. Stainforth

Welcome to Stainforth and the Hatfield Colliery Trail. On this walk we will pass through Stainforth and discover the heritage of the town and its links to the river Don. Nearby to where you are standing is the Stainforth Market. There has been a market in Stainforth since 1348 which was established by the Anglo-Saxons. The Market was established here as it was an easy place to ford the River Don, hence the name Stainforth, meaning 'Stoney Ford.'

To begin, follow Princess Avenue to the end until you reach the Hatfield Main Club.

2. Hatfield Main Club

Looking straight over the road you will see Hatfield Main Working Men's Club. The Pit Club was built to support the local mining community and remains an active community and social hub. The Pit Club played a historic role during the National Union of Mineworkers strike from 1984-85. It was a vital hub for the picketers, strike committees and union gatherings. In the grounds of the Pit Club, you can see the Hatfield Miners' Strike Memorial, which is dedicated to those miners who took action to defend their livelihoods.



Turn right and continue along East Lane for around 500m, then take a left down Waggon's Way. Once you reach the roundabout, walk around it anticlockwise to pass the Pit Head.

3. Hatfield Main Pit Head

Look to your right and you can see the Hatfield Main Colliery. Both Shafts of the colliery were sunk simultaneously, with the first shaft reaching the High Hazel Coal Seam in August 1916, at a depth of 786 meters. The second shaft took a little longer to complete due to problems with it taking on water, but was completed in 1917. At the colliery's peak in the 1930s, it employed 2,500 people, many of whom lived in Hatfield and Stainforth.

On the 18th November 1993, it was announced by the coal board that the mine would close in a period when lots of pits were shut down. The pit has been re-opened and closed many times since its first announcement of closure - closing in 2001, 2004 and its final closure in 2015, following decades of uncertainty. Coal mining in the UK officially finished in 2023, with the closure of the open-cast Ffos-y-fan mine in South Wales. You can still see the pit head today, as it gained grade 1 listed status in November 2015. It is now the only surviving pit head in Doncaster.

In 1996, the site was used for the filming of *Brassed Off* and can be seen in several scenes. The film shows the struggles of Grimethorpe Colliery Band during the miners' strike as they try to reach the national Brass Band Championship. Almost every colliery in Britain sponsored a brass band, including Hatfield Main with the Hatfield Colliery Band, which later merged with Askern Colliery Band. The Hatfield and Askern Colliery Band still performs to this day.

Continue to walk around the roundabout and head along East Lane gateway, following the sign to Stainforth back towards the Hatfield Pit Club. Turn right along East Lane for a short distance to see the memorial wheel on your right.

4. Hatfield Colliery Memorial Wheel

The Hatfield Colliery Memorial Wheel was installed to honour the people who worked in the mine. This wheel originally ran on the pit head but was later restored and installed here. The wheel was used to move to lower the lift into the mine with a cable that went around it, moving equipment, people and coal in and out of the mine.

Continue along East Lane for around 350 metres and turn right into East Lane Park. Continue straight along the path through the park with the fence on your left.



5. Spoilheap

The distant hill on your right is not a natural feature of the landscape. This is where the waste from the mine, known as slag, was deposited from the Hatfield Main Colliery. After the Aberfan Disaster in 1966, when a large spoil heap slid down the hillside and killing 28 Adults and 116 children in the local school, new legislation was brought in to ensure the height and slope of spoil heaps near public areas would not cause a similar disaster. In February 2013 the Hatfield Colliery spoil heap did slide, causing damage to the nearby rail line and an estimated £30-40 millions of damage.

At the end of the park, take a left passing between the houses and come out on to Beech Crescent. Turn left and then at the T-junction, turn right along Coronation Road. At the end of the road cross over and turn right onto Thorne Road.

Once you reach the bus shelter, turn left through the grass area between the bungalows. When you reach New Park Estate cross over the road and turn right, then immediately left along the footpath that runs alongside the playground.

Once you reach the field, turn left, then immediately right along Ramskir lane heading towards the lone house on the bank of the Canal

6. Coal Wharf

Once you reach the house walk around it to the right, following the footpath sign, then head right along the canal.

The canal here is the Stainforth and Keadby canal, which opened in 1802 and provided a huge boost to the local economy. The canal was constructed during Britain's great canal age, when huge networks of canals were constructed to allow the transport of goods. Canals proved more efficient and cheaper than using wagons on roads. Boat-building industries began in Stainforth, Thorne and Goole to provide cargo boats for the navigations.

Further along the canal you will reach the remains of a historic coal wharf. Look for a concrete section along the side of the Canal, and the old mooring points where the boats would dock to be loaded with coal from Hatfield Colliery. Coal would be transported from here to nearby factories and delivered to docks for transport to other areas of the country.

Turn around and return along the canal in the direction you came from, passing the lone house where you joined the canal earlier. Follow the canal until you reach the next set of houses.



7. *Stainforth Lock*

Just over the canal from the houses is an inlet from the canal into a small marina, for boats that have permanent moorings at Thorne Cruising Club. It did not always have this purpose, as previously there was a lock here, known as Stainforth Lock. The Lock provided access to the River Don, which runs parallel with the canal, but later turns North towards Goole. From here, boats could access the river Don to travel north from the Stainforth and Keadby Canal, along the Dutch River and into the River Ouse at Goole. This route allowed goods to be moved out of South Yorkshire and into the Humber Estuary at a far higher rate than if they had to go round through the river Trent. However, once the New Junction canal was opened in 1905 the lock here became redundant and was officially closed in 1939.

Follow the canal until you reach the beer garden of the New Inn, a short distance from where you are standing.

8. *The New Inn/ A Pint of History*

The New Inn was originally an end-of-terrace house, used as a drinking establishment to serve the many boat builders and canal workers in Stainforth. The pub was likely one of Britain's early Beer Houses, one of many thousands which were set up across the country in people's homes from 1830, when the government brought in the Beer House Act. A license for the low fee of 2 guineas allowed houses to become small pubs, brewing and selling mild beer, in order to discourage the sale of stronger liquors. Another pub, the Mariner's Compass, later renamed the Station Inn, was directly opposite on the other side of the canal, which closed down in the 1960's. Local stories remember people racing between the two pubs, with some choosing to walk around the bridge, and others jumping into the canal to swim across. To learn more about the New Inn and canal look at the information board in the pub garden.

Continue to follow the canal. Once you reach the bridge, head to the left. At the junction continue straight ahead. Once you have crossed over Field Road you will have completed our walk.



References

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