

Thurnby and Bushby villages lie about four miles east of Leicester, adjoining the city boundary. The civil parish of Bushby was combined with that of Thurnby in 1935. It is said that the boundary between Thurnby and Bushby bisects the Rose and Crown, the lounge being in Thurnby and the bar being in Bushby.

Both villages are ridge settlements and archaeological evidence confirms the area has been inhabited since at least Roman times. The village names, which both end in '-by', suggest Viking settlements.

Agriculture predominated until recent times. Good viewpoints of the surrounding countryside, which includes ridge and furrow are marked on the map with an asterisk (*).

The original settlements grew on the southern side of the ridge. Modern housing has been built on the northern side. So, effectively, the A47 divides the old and new areas. The Trail focuses on the old part, which is now a conservation area, but offers an option to extend your visit to the north side.



Sources

- **Victoria County History** - Leicestershire Vol 5 pp321-330, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/leics/vol5/pp321-330#highlight-first>
- **Ros Willatts**, former Conservation Officer, Harborough District Council (2005)
- **Articles in the Thurnby And Bushby Society Newsletter**
- **South East of Leicester** written and published by Helen Boynton (2004)
- **Thurnby Court: The Story of an Extravagant but Short-Lived Leicestershire Mansion** written and published by Brian Screaton (Third Edition September 2018).
- **A Guide to Thurnby Parish Church** written by E G Brown published by Thurnby Parochial Church Council (1974).

Acknowledgements

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We do hope you enjoyed your walk around Thurnby and Bushby. If you would like to learn more about the history of the villages please contact:

The Thurnby And Bushby Society who maintain a Village Archive, which opened in May 2010, and can be viewed by appointment. You can also view our website www.tabslife.uk for further history, images and archive information.



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THURNBY AND BUSHBY Heritage Trail

The trail starts and ends at the Rose and Crown public house 45 Main Street Thurnby Leicester LE7 9PJ.

Parking is permitted in the car park by courtesy of the landlord, who would welcome your custom.

About 3 km/2 miles
The Trail can be walked in two halves from the Rose and Crown



1. The **Rose and Crown** has its origins in the 17th century and was originally cruck-framed (i.e. supported on A-frames from the ground to the roof ridge). However, the

timber supports were lost in the devastating fire of November 2004. Luckily, the planners insisted that the roof be rethatched rather than tiled. The field behind the pub was a very popular toboggan run down the steep hill in winter.

The road immediately in front of the Rose and Crown is the former village main street. It was replaced by the wider road in the 1960s. The village sign on the green between these two roads displays the Sherard arms. The Sherards were a prominent Bushby family in the 17th century. Mary Sherard is an ancestor of the late Queen Mother.

With the Rose and Crown on your left proceed down the hill.

2. Looking at the houses on your left-hand side you come to **33 Main Street "The Gilstead"** - (17th century) – a listed building. This is thatched with reed, rather than straw, which is the more widely used thatching material in this area.

Numbers 29 and 31 Main Street

are Victorian. Note the patterned slates (fish scales) in different colours from different Welsh quarries. See also the hipped gable tops of the roof. The original windows remain on Number 29. The roof is best viewed from the other side of the road.



Number 11 Main Street a listed building, has 18th century windows with central openings and cambered lintels to the two ground floor windows.

Number 9 Main Street is a cottage that was "slotted in" after the neighbouring cottages were built when the previous house burnt down. It has an attractive bay with an "egg and dart" terracotta string course between the ground and first floors.

On the gable end of **Number 7 Main Street (The Cottage)** you will see the date 1880 and upper floor windows with both middle and top openings.

Number 5 Main Street is a listed building with a wall of cobbles collected from fields round about. These are not cut Tilton stone which indicates that they are very old. This cottage retains its original shutters and a six-panel flush door. The windows and doors are early 19th century. The roof is made of Swithland slate.



Pass St Luke's Close and Church Green and then turn left down Court Road.

3. You will see on the left, near to the road name sign, a granite boulder. This is not Charnwood granite and may be an erratic (non-local stone - probably brought here by a glacier).

Continue to the bottom of the hill where you will see a turning on your right – Lakeside Court. Cross at this point.

4. The eleven houses and bungalows forming this cul-de-sac were built on land formerly belonging to **Thurnby Court**, which was one of Leicestershire's shortest-lived but most extravagant stately homes. It lay behind the wall on your right as you walked down the hill.

Thurnby Court was completed in about 1870. It was built for James Alexander Jackson, a wealthy American gentleman from Philadelphia who made his fortune in cotton broking and participating in *running the blockade** during the American Civil War. It cost about £250,000 to build which is approximately £20 million in today's money.

* *Blockade Running in the Civil War. Blockade running, and the use of small swift ships known as blockade runners, was the Confederacy's response to the Union blockade ordered by President Abraham Lincoln on April 19, 1861, one week after Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter*

It had a marble hall, seventeen bedrooms, a winter garden with a swimming pool beneath, a billiard room, racquet court, its own gas works and unusual, but unsuccessful, underground stables with a resident blacksmith.

The Jacksons lived there for 21 years but latterly found it too great a drain on their finances. It was rented out for ten years and then had a chequered history before being demolished by dynamite in 1916.



The ornamental lake, formerly used for skating in the winter, and the gazebo on the island, were once part of the Court's splendid grounds.



The gazebo, a listed building, is built of Charnwood stone and was originally thatched. From its roof supports you will see quaint carved animal heads.

Please note that the lake and gazebo are on private land.

Turn left and walk up Court Road and you will come to an open tarmac area - The Square.

5. The entrance to Thurnby Court was located in The Square where outbuildings of the Court have been converted into dwellings.

Firs Farm is located on The Square. The roof is of Swithland slate which ceased to be quarried in the 1880s. Swithland slates have strong textures and vary in size. Note that the upper floor windows are three-light with only the middle light opening, indicating that the windows are pre-WW1.

In The Square, you will also see a pump (early 19th century as it is made of lead rather than cast iron) with a large bulbous stone support. This was part of a well-house which served the residents of the Court. Water from the pump was used by the villagers until the arrival of mains water in the late 1940s.

You will also see a range of old cottages numbered 1 to 4. **Number 1** (adjacent to the Pump) used to be the village Post Office. **Number 4**, a listed building, is thought to be the small timber-framed cross-wing of an otherwise demolished medieval house. With these cottages to your left, look over the road to the three-storey red-brick house. This is **The Dower House**. The building and its wall fronting Grange Lane are listed. The end wall to the east of the house shows the line of the original end wall in 17th century brick. This is another property roofed with Swithland slate.

Now turn left down Grange Lane.

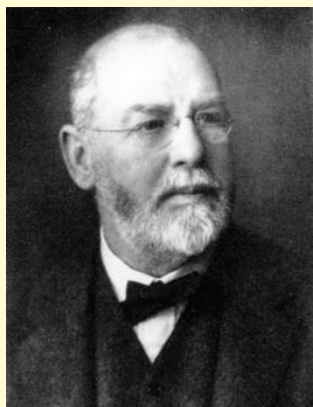
On the left, on the third window (in the low outbuilding) note the centre opening. It has a ripple glass pane from the early 20th century and small external sills (very early windows had no sills at all). Some of the subsequent old cottages also have their original shutters.

Continue walking down Grange Lane and stop where it bends sharply to the right.

6. You will see to the left, four Edwardian villas – **Numbers 47 to 53. Number 51 (The Holt)** has many interesting features, some influenced by Art Nouveau. It is late 19th century. Behind, to the left, is the former coach house with hayloft.

Continue straight ahead taking care as there is no footpath.

7. On your left you will see **The Lodge Residential Home**. This is a Queen Anne style house built circa



1920. It was originally the home of Claud Bennion. He was the son of Charles Bennion (pictured) who features next in this walk. This property has a graduated slate roof, probably from the former county of Westmorland (now Cumbria). Note the lead-topped early soil vent pipe emerging from the roof.

Re-trace your steps to Grange Lane and cross to the pavement. Turn left and continue until you come to a driveway on your right which leads to Manor Field.

8. On your left you will see Bradgate Close. This was formerly the site of **Thurnby Grange** which, for forty years, was the home of Charles Bennion, a business man, manufacturer and philanthropist who purchased Bradgate Park for use by the people of the City and County of Leicester. He is buried in Thurnby churchyard and commemorated in a window in the Church, as are the Jacksons of Thurnby Court. In 1939 The Grange was purchased by what was then Billesdon Rural District Council, for use as the Council's offices.



Take the footpath straight ahead with the children's play area on your left. The path then goes diagonally to the right.

9. When you reach the end of the footpath you will see down a drive to your left, **The Manor House**. This house has an air-raid cupboard. There is Swithland slate on the roof of the house but the garages are thatched. The house and some of the outbuildings are listed.

10. On your right you will see **The Vicarage**, which, it is believed, was built in 1908. This house has hung tiles on its upper walls. The chimneys are cross-shaped and set diagonally and there is a loggia on the south side – evidence of the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

11. We now come to **St. Luke's Church** which is built of ironstone, limestone and Mountsorrel granite. The window surrounds and churchyard walls are all granite. Although originally a medieval church, much of the fabric dates from the restoration of 1870-73. It has a 13th century nave and a central tower on massive arches built when Norman style was changing to English Gothic style. The tub shaped font, which is possibly of the late 13th century, has a base formed by eight clustered shafts. Note the gargoyles copying medieval faces – look for the one on the south wall – does this one have toothache?

Continue past the church up Main Street, keeping to the left-hand side.

12. You will pass by the **village school**, which is another listed building. This was built with money provided by the large land-owning Powys-Keck family. Note the blue brick detailing and the monogram of H. L. Powys-Keck with the date 1865 on the gable. The building was originally one storey and it is still possible to see the outline of the brickwork to the lower roof level on the gable end nearest the church. In the forecourt is a well and to the left of the building is the former toilet block. A cast-iron pump lies in front of the school. This is not as old as the pump in The Square.

The playing fields behind the school are the site of the excavated village sand pits. After the excavation, the pits were a popular children's play area and were also used for army tank practice. A body of a woman was recovered from there in 1955. She died of accelerated exposure and was buried as *Woman Unknown*.

13. Thurnby Memorial Hall, opened in 1926 to commemorate those who lost their lives in WW1, is on your left. There is quality detailing on the front doorway.

Continue walking up Main Street to the top of the hill and turn left into Hollies Way (14).

Either after about 30 metres turn right onto the public footpath between Nos 58 and 60 Hollies Way. Follow this as it runs alongside Randles Close until you reach the main road (A47). You are now at 15.

Or continue on Hollies Way until you come to a Green on your left.

Hollies Way is named after "The Hollies", a substantial house which stood here. The next part of Hollies Way is on the line of the main drive to the house which was lined with oaks. Some of these are still there.

Continue down Hollies Way and into the short cul-de-sac at the bottom. Then continue through the walkway (the original entrance to "The Hollies") to reach the main road (A47). Turn right and walk up until you are opposite Dalby Avenue.

15. Across the road, where house **Number 728** now stands, an old cab from a baker's cart stood on rough ground on the Dalby Avenue/A47 corner which was used as a collection point for parcels delivered by road.

Optional Detour

16. Cross the A47 (take care!) to Dalby Avenue. This is a particularly attractive tree-lined road, developed piecemeal from about 1913 so has a range of individually designed houses many of which retain their front hedges. It is a cul-de-sac so brings you back to the A47 to rejoin the Trail. **Cross the A47 (take care). Turn left.**

Along the A47 are many large, individually designed houses chiefly from the early 20th century and between the wars. These would probably have been built as residences for industrial managers when such houses still faced main roads.

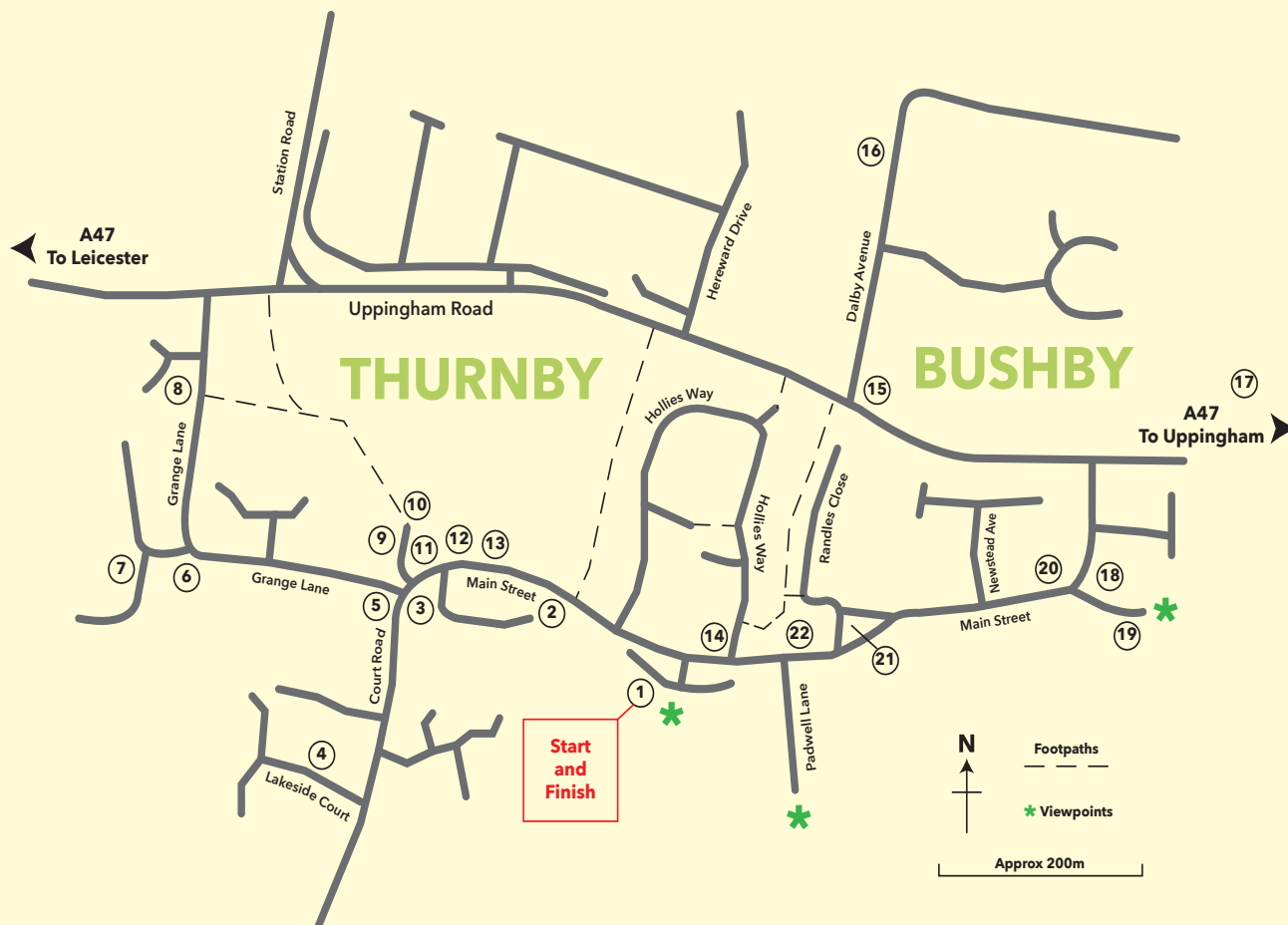
17. Just past the bus stop on the corner of the A47 and Main Street look up the left-hand side of the A47 where you'll see a ball-stop fence in the distance. This is **Wadkin's Field**, which is now used by the village for recreation. It was formerly Wadkin Sports Ground and Pavilion which belonged to the Wadkin Woodworking Machinery Company of Leicester.

Now turn right off the A47 back on to Main Street.

18. Stand where the road bends sharply to the right. This was the heart of old Bushby and included three farmhouses dating from at least the early 18th century. Opposite on your left, you will see converted barns and a former farmhouse known as **Home Farm House**.

19. At the end of the cul-de-sac in front of you there is another former farmhouse **Bushby Lodge Farm**. This is just out of sight from Main Street.

20. Just round the bend, on your right, is the third former farmhouse with its exposed ironstone walling (now two dwellings). This walling is believed to be from the 16th century.



Continue along Main Street until you come to a triangular green planted with trees.

21. This small wooded area is known as **Bushby Spinney**. The Powys-Keck family owned much of the land in the area and marked the boundaries by planting groups of pine trees. Those on Bushby Spinney were planted in the 1920s and there are other groups to be seen on the way to Stoughton and Houghton-on-the-Hill. You will see four very fine Edwardian houses fronting this area.

Continue along Main Street

22. On the right, you will see a pair of cottages dating from 1730. In the 1960s Reginald Dalby, who illustrated

the early Thomas the Tank Engine books, lived at **Number 48**. On the left is **Bushby House**, a former farmhouse, which has a castellated outbuilding from about 1800 (perhaps formerly the privy).

Continue along Main Street back to the Rose and Crown and the end of your walk.



Note: Many of the heritage buildings are private residences. We ask you to respect the privacy of village residents and ensure you do not trespass on private property.