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Bardsey to Thorner

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Lay-by on the A58, just south of the village of Bardsey (SE 369431).
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer 289 - Leeds, Harrogate, Wetherby & Pontefract
Distance	7 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This easy walk from Bardsey, north east of Leeds, takes you to the attractive rural village of Thorner which is registered in the Domesday Book as “Torneure”. Bardsey also appeared in the Domesday Book and claims to have the oldest pub in England (the Bingley Arms). The route of this walk does not however visit Bardsey’s centre but does pass the attractive church.

Both villages have churches which are listed buildings. Parts of the Parish Church of All Hallows in Bardsey, which is Grade I listed, go back to the 9th century. St Peter’s Church in Thorner is a relative newcomer, being Grade II listed and some of it dating from the 15th century.

The walk passes through Hetchell Wood Nature Reserve which, although relatively small, contains a variety of habitats because it is over two distinct types of bedrock – magnesium limestone (alkaline) and millstone grit (acidic). A 10 metre high cliff of the millstone grit is exposed at Hetchell Cliff.

The walk also provides an opportunity to visit the Pompocali earthworks. There seems no certainty as to the purpose of these earthworks. Given their proximity to the course of an old Roman road and ancient quarries, a popular theory seems to be that they are spoil heaps from Roman quarrying. Whatever they were, they make an impressive spectacle.

An unusual warning here. If you do not like dogs, avoid this walk. I do not think I have ever seen as many dogs being walked on any route I have ever followed. As well as individual walkers, more than one professional dog walker was also using the paths. Not all dogs were on leads. Doggies’ calling cards were in evidence and I deplore the dog walkers who have not “poop-scooped”, or even used a stick to flick offending mess off the main paths.

There are lunch opportunities at the Mexborough Arms and the Beehive pubs in Thorner.

The walk starts from a lay-by just south of Bardsey and on the east side of the A58. The A58 is a very fast road with little scope to dawdle and it is easy to miss the lay-by. If coming from the south (Leeds) side on the A58, you are almost certain to sail

past on the opposite side of the road. The best advice is to approach from Bardsey. Just past the 50mph speed limit sign, look out for a bus shelter on the right. The lay-by is on the left, immediately after it.

Start: Leave the lay-by via the path at its rear into the woods (SE 369431). At a 'T' junction with the old railway line, turn right for about 50 yards then take the path on the left.

The path opens out into a field and follows the left hand side of the wood. At a hedge, keep straight ahead under the power lines, ignoring the path to the right.

About 100 yards further on, turn right (SE 375428), following the right hand side of the field. Bardsey Beck soon becomes visible amongst the trees on the right.

You enter Hetchell Wood Nature Reserve and stay on the broad track straight ahead, soon passing Hetchell Crags on the left. Ignore the path going uphill soon after the crags.

You meet a broad track by the bridge over the beck. Turn left (SE 376423).

Stay on this track ignoring a bridle way off to the right after a few yards. You soon come to a crossroads of paths/tracks. Turn right through a gateway with a public bridleway sign to look at the Pompopali earthworks (SE 376423).

Return to the broad track and turn right. At the road turn left very briefly then right to follow the public bridleway sign to a 'T' junction at the end of the wood. Turn right here and after only 20 yards or so, when the path forks, bear left following the public bridleway sign (SE 392426).

The route from here can get a little confusing because there are a few tracks without any indication as to where they go so I describe a route where you can follow fingerposts. This may not be the absolute shortest but it does not add greatly to the overall distance.

At a two-way fingerpost showing a bridleway in each direction, turn right (SE 498423). You will soon see Milner Beck on the left below you. At another two-way fingerpost indicating bridleways, turn right to follow a left hand field edge going slightly uphill (SE 393420).

At the top of the field, turn left and go through a metal gate. Keep straight ahead ignoring a bridleway off to the right. This is Kennels Lane. There is a footpath off this lane to Thorner at SE 382417 but I must confess I missed this and continued to the road. There is very little difference in distance (a two sides of a rectangle situation).

At the road turn left (SE 377415) and left again at the junction, passing an old milestone, and continue along Milner Lane, into Thorner.

At the next road junction, turn right signposted “Thorner ¼ mile” and “Leeds 9 miles”. Pass the parish church.

Continue through the village and turn right on Carr Lane (SE 378405), immediately before the Mexborough Arms. As the road bends to the left, take the footpath on the right by the Thorner Victory Hall following the public footpath fingerpost (SE 377406).

Go through a kissing gate and follow the footpath alongside the hedge. Oaklands Manor sits on the hill to the left.

In the top left hand corner of a field, go over a stile, and follow the walled path alongside the manor. When the walled path ends at the private road, turn right then left at the public road (SE 373414).

Stay on the road for about half a mile, going round a sharp right hand bend. It starts to rise. Turn right at the triangular island following the fingerpost (SE 371417). Pass the white painted house on the corner then a stone house and turn left just next to the garage on to the public footpath.

Follow the right hand side of the field and take the footpath off to the right, about two thirds of the way along the field over a footbridge over the beck into the trees.

The path quickly opens into another field. Turn left to follow its left hand boundary. At the end of that field, go over another stile and turn right following the right hand field boundary (SE 368420).

At the end of this field, meet a broad track which sweeps over to the right. Ignore this right turn and keep left, walking parallel with the power lines.

At the main road (A58), go briefly left then almost immediately right to follow the public bridleway sign.

This track is initially a private road to a number of houses and at its end, continue on the narrow footpath straight ahead.

At a junction where the main path looks to go left, go right and follow the left hand edge of the field as it descends, crosses a beck then goes into the churchyard. Turn right, around the right hand side of the church and at the road turn right again. On reaching the main A58, turn right back to the car.

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