

DISCOVER | GAINSBOROUGH

# A WALK THROUGH TIME

A scenic 90 minute walk through  
the history of this ancient market town



## INTRODUCTION

Whether you are local or visiting Gainsborough from afar, this walk gives an introduction to the rich and varied history of the town. The jewel in the crown is the immaculately preserved medieval manor house, Gainsborough Old Hall, dating from the 15th century and boasting a succession of famous visitors, including Richard III and Henry VIII.

Discover the story of the Separatists, who met in secret at the Old Hall and sailed from Gainsborough to escape persecution, eventually linking with others and known to the world as the Mayflower Pilgrims.

On the riverside walk is a small sculpture that continues the story of the Pilgrim Woman. Take note of the blue plaques and riverside signage which build a picture of the role that the River Trent played in the expansion of the town. With a thriving inland port, merchants and ships' captains began building many fine Georgian residences, some of which survive today, and feature on the route.

We see evidence of the hugely successful engineering companies such as Marshall's, which led the world in the manufacture of agricultural traction engines. Their legacy included public buildings and housing for the Victorian workers of the town, and their Britannia Iron Works are now preserved in the form of Marshall's Yard shopping centre.

This walk is by no means fully inclusive of every site and story pertaining to our town's history, and we urge you to visit our heritage attractions, where you will find many more stories of Gainsborough's past.



### GAINSBOROUGH HERITAGE CENTRE

Housed in Gainsborough's old telephone exchange and post office (built 1904 and opened 1905) is the Heritage Centre, brimming with memorabilia from Gainsborough's social and industrial history. The ground floor includes displays of Gainsborough-made products and machinery from local firms such as Marshall's, Rose's,

Sandar's and Edlington's, as well as much more relating to Gainsborough's local industrial heritage. The Exchange Tea Room, toilets and disabled lift are also situated on the ground floor.

The first floor showcases a 20th century themed street with former shops from Gainsborough's past and features a post office and house with a backyard scene and the Centre's changing exhibition room.

While the second floor is mainly archives, it does also incorporate a reading and research room where you can discover a great deal about the town.

Opposite the Heritage Centre is Stan's Pocket Park, an attractive little park with seating, which makes a good picnic or rest area.



### OLD NICK THEATRE & POLICE MUSEUM

The Old Nick was the Divisional Headquarters for the Lincolnshire Constabulary from 1860 to 1972 with an initial staff of a superintendent, a sergeant and six constables. It was also a Magistrates Court until 1976. The building incorporated a residence for the superintendent and his family until 1952, which has now been recreated as it would have been during the Victorian period. This provides an amazing time warp experience of Victorian policing and family life.

The Victorian Police Station is dedicated to preserving and displaying the history of Lincolnshire Police and visitors can explore the cells, exercise yards and charge room. Learn about the many Lincolnshire murderers and their trials and punishments. See displays including an original 1950's Police Box (as used in Doctor Who) and a restored set of pillory stocks. Because of the deaths recorded between 1860 and 1940 (24 deaths plus one female suicide) the venue is popular with paranormal groups across the UK and film crews from across the world.

The Gainsborough Theatre Club moved into the building in 1980, paying a peppercorn rent to Douglas Parkinson, to rehearse and perform in the former Magistrate's Court, subsequently converted into a 'theatre in a round'.

In 1979, Douglas Parkinson passed away and bequeathed the building to the Gainsborough Theatre Club on the proviso that it would remain a theatre. Continuing work over the last 40 years has built this into a wonderful community theatre, used by the in-house acting teams and many other theatre groups.



### MARSHALL'S YARD

Built on the former site of the Marshall family's Britannia Iron Works, Marshall's Yard shopping complex is home to shops, cafés and restaurants, as well as the offices of West Lindsey District Council.

Founded in 1848, Marshall's moved to this location in 1855 and at one time was the largest factory under a single roof in Europe. At the height of its success, the company employed around 5000 men and boys; skilled engineers who built steam traction engines and agricultural machinery for the world.

During World War II they built the famous X-Craft midget submarine whose story is told in the movie 'Above us the Waves'. This historic machine still survives and is on display at the Royal Navy Museum. There are many machines built by Marshall Sons & Co. still in use today which is testament to the skills of the men that worked there.



### OLD COUNTY COURT HOUSE

Built in 1759 as a private residence for Mr Eastland Hawksmore, this fine Grecian style house was converted to serve as the new County Court House in 1886. Look out for the detailed water spouts that serve the guttering. The building is now privately owned but still houses the original courtroom.



### FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

This simple building, dating from 1704 and believed to be the oldest building in this area of the town, is one of the few survivors of the devastating fire in 1774 that destroyed most of Lord Street. It then went on to survive the Luftwaffe bombings in 1942, which flattened most of the neighbouring buildings on Market Street. Its simplicity conveys a powerful feeling of the history of Quakerism in Lincolnshire.



### LORD STREET

This was once a grand street that led from the market place to the river front and the Lord's Staithe, where ships unloaded at the busy port. Sailors would have headed straight for Lord Street with its taverns, inns and shops. Taking its name from the Lord of the Manor, who financed a complete rebuild after a catastrophic fire in 1774, this was originally known as Pottergate.

Between Friends Meeting House and Lord Street there is a blue plaque commemorating the site of the start of William Rose's business. He went on to be one of Gainsborough's most famous and successful engineering entrepreneurs, after his invention of the automatic wrapping machine, eventually going on to produce motor cars.

Look out for the arched entrance to the White Lion Yard, an example of Gainsborough's many yards (the tightly packed passageways lined by small, back-to-back houses where many families lived in poverty) which proliferated during the Victorian expansion of Gainsborough. Most of the yards were cleared in the 20th century and very few survive today.

Turn down Parnell Street, the ground that is now a solicitors' building and the library was once part of the old Mart Yard, belonging to the Old Hall. It was home to the big marts and fayres of olden times.



### GAINSBOROUGH OLD HALL

Gainsborough Old Hall is one of England's biggest, grandest and best-preserved medieval manor houses, unusually set in a town centre. Lavishly built in brick and timber-framing, it is distinctive both for its imposing size and its battlemented brick tower. Inside, the great hall is noted for its soaring roof and vast bay window. The huge medieval kitchen is among the most impressive in the country, noted for its cavernous fireplaces and fully equipped to prepare sumptuous feasts.

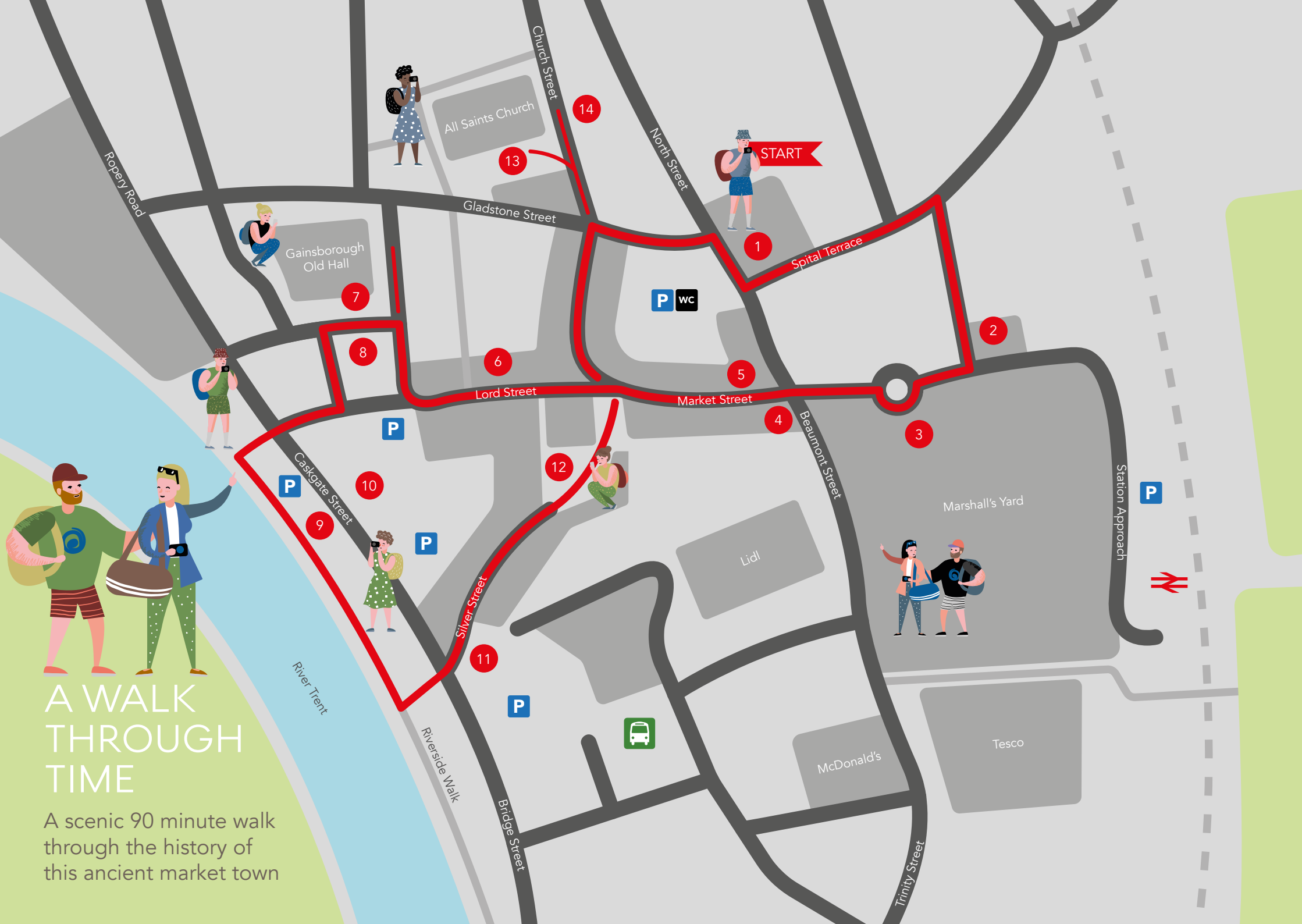
Mainly constructed during the 15th century for Sir Thomas Burgh, a Yorkist supporter during the Wars of the Roses, it was added to during the Elizabethan period and later. The hall was visited by Richard III in 1483, and Henry VIII with his wife Catherine Howard in 1541, and it is also noted for its connection with the Mayflower Pilgrims. In the care of English Heritage it has a pleasant café with public access, and attractive open gardens with seating.



### GAINSBOROUGH LIBRARY

Gainsborough Library is a Grade II listed building built in 1905 to commemorate Edward VII's accession to the throne. The land was donated by Sir William Hickman who owned the Old Hall. The building was designed by Scorer and Gamble, with a remit from the Hickman family that it must blend with and complement the architecture of the Old Hall. The project to build a public library was financed by a grant from the Scottish/American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Take a close look at the carvings on the entrance porch and around the exterior walls, noting the plaques commemorating influential men in Gainsborough's past.





# A WALK THROUGH TIME

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START

Gainsborough Old Hall

All Saints Church

Lidl

McDonald's

Tesco

Marshall's Yard

River Trent

Ropery Road

Church Street

North Street

Gladstone Street

Spital Terrace

Lord Street

Market Street

Beaumont Street

Caskgate Street

Silver Street

Riverside Walk

Bridge Street

Trinity Street

Station Approach

7

8

6

5

2

3

4

12

10

9

11

14

13

1

P

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P

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P WC



P

P

P

P

P WC





## RIVERSIDE WALK

We join the riverside walk in Whitton Gardens, a picturesque picnic area with views across the River Trent. The gated steps leading down to the water are all that is left of Lord's Staithe, a landing area where ships put in at the thriving port, to unload goods for Gainsborough Old Hall and the surrounding town, paying a tax to the Lord of the Manor for that service. Later this was known as Packet Landing, when the paddle steamers stopped here with passengers and goods to disembark. At low tide the timbers of this ancient wharf can still be seen.

Located here too, is the Pilgrim Woman. A diminutive sculpture, a symbol of growth and new beginnings as she prepares to leave her home to travel to America aboard the Mayflower.

The sculpture was designed by Nottinghamshire sculptor Rachel Carter and is part of her 'Spirit of the Mayflower' project, which commemorates the 400 year anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower.

From here you can follow the riverside path to Chapel Staithe. Imagine this scene, filled with ships moored up at the landings, unloading goods and passengers straight to the mills and warehouses that lined the route!

The Trent is one of only a handful of rivers in the UK that has a tidal bore. Ours, known as the Aegir, is named after the Norse god of the sea and is a nod to the town's connections with the Vikings who settled and conquered England from the town. Look out for a blue plaque further down the riverside path that describes this.

As you leave Whitton Gardens, look inland at the grand three storey red brick house known as Elswitha Hall. Then enjoy the view ahead, of converted warehouses that tightly line the waterfront. At Chapel Staithe you may wish to carry on along the river path all the way to the Trent Bridge. Completed in 1791 it is the only known structure in England built by the civil engineer William Weston, who later became the pre-eminent civil engineer in the new United States. Alternatively turn inland, to cross Bridge Street into Silver Street.



Image: Steve Hatton at Electric Egg



## ELSWITHA HALL

This building was named after Elswitha of Gainsborough. She was Queen and wife to Alfred the Great in the 9th century. This substantial 18th century town house was built in 1759 and has three storeys, a basement and attics. It was the birthplace of Sir Halford John Mackinder, the geographer and politician (1861 – 1947).

This house stands alone now, but was once part of a street of tightly packed properties, known as Caskgate Street. Elswitha Hall would have stood side by side with, and opposite a line of similarly sized buildings separated by a narrow roadway. Most of those buildings were demolished in the 1960s. The house has been a doctor's surgery for almost 100 years.



## SILVER STREET

As you enter Silver Street you will see Ship Court to your left. This stands on top of an area where many medieval skeletons were excavated in the 19th century, and it is believed that there may have been a graveyard here attached to a chapel. This and the

Market Place were the core of the medieval borough. It was in 1637 that Charles I declared that the tenants should pay their rent in silver, hence the street name.

The entrance to Ship Court or Ship Inn Yard is another fine example of an entrance-way to one of Gainsborough's many yards and was also the site of the first waterworks from around 1795. There is a well-known photo showing King Edward VII walking through the archway from Silver Street on his visit to the town.



## MARKET PLACE

Since 1281, an open market has been associated with this spot. Beginning in the early 18th century the Gainsborough market has taken place here twice a week on a Saturday and Tuesday. The Town Hall was built in the 19th century, in the place of the Old Moot Hall, which was an ancient building. The current building was damaged by a bombing raid in World War II, which reduced many buildings on Market Street to rubble. The modern façade is the remedial work done in the 1950s. Many of the three storey buildings around the market place began life as private residences in the 18th century. Small single-fronted shops with bow-windows gradually took over on the ground floors. These were replaced by

Victorian shopfronts, containing larger windows, then eventually single shops were knocked through to make the double shopfronts that we see now.



This sketch by Jane Stark shows the Market Place in the 1820s, and has been kindly supplied by Gainsborough Heritage Centre.

At the opposite end of the Market Place is a narrow opening into Curtis Walk. This quaint row of shops provides a glimpse of how old Gainsborough would have looked. The noted artist, Karl Wood, lived and worked in this area of the Market Place.

Templar. Thomas the first Lord Burgh, had his private chapel here, adjacent to his home, the Old Hall. Only the tower survives as part of the original church. When the new church was built in 1736, the tombs and alabaster effigies of the Burgh family were sadly lost.

A popular rhyme at the time the new church was built went:

“Gainsborough’s proud people - Put a new Church to an old steeple”.

Inside the entranceway the gravestone of Richard Rollett, Captain Cook’s sailmaker, is well worth a visit.



### MERCHANT’S HOUSE

This Georgian Grade II listed building dates back to 1740, built by Mr Sharples, a wool merchant. The archway, which was at the centre of this very large house, would have led to stables and warehousing.

## GAINSBOROUGH



### ALL SAINTS CHURCH

This early 18th century church stands on the grounds of the former medieval church. The earliest mention of the original church is in 1185, when it was given by Roger de Talbot, Lord of Gainsborough Manor, to the Knights

### GETTING HERE

Gainsborough is within easy reach of the A1, M180 and good routes from Lincoln, Nottingham, South Yorkshire and the Lincolnshire Wolds. Two train stations serve the town, and the bus station serves many local routes. If coming by car, the town boasts a good number of inexpensive car parks. The long-term car parks where you can park all day, close to the walking route are:



Lord Street	DN21 2DF
Ship’s Court	DN21 2DL
Whitton Gardens	DN21 2DF
Riverside	DN21 2NJ
North Street	DN21 2HS

### ACCESSIBILITY

The walk itself is suitable for wheelchairs, pushchairs, and those with limited mobility. The route is flat, with a mixture of pedestrianised streets, wide footpaths and safe crossing places. There is seating in the grounds of Gainsborough Old Hall, at Whitton Gardens, in the Market Place, and opposite the Gainsborough Heritage Centre at Stan’s Pocket Park. Please see websites for the individual attractions to check accessibility inside their buildings.



### REFRESHMENTS AND COMFORT

On this walk, you will never be more than 10 minutes from shops and cafés which serve the town centre, and where attractions have a refreshment stop incorporated, we have indicated this in the description.



There are also several pleasant sites where picnics can be enjoyed, which are included in the descriptions. Please remember to dispose of your rubbish responsibly and take it home with you if a suitable bin is not available. Public toilets are available at the centre of the walk, in the Roseway car park (DN21 2HP).



## CONTACT DETAILS

### GAINSBOROUGH HERITAGE CENTRE

01427 610526

[www.gainsboroughheritage.co.uk](http://www.gainsboroughheritage.co.uk)

### OLD NICK THEATRE & MUSEUM

01427 239387

[www.gainsboroughtheatrecompany.com](http://www.gainsboroughtheatrecompany.com)

0743 4540 516

[gainsboroughtheatrecompany@talktalk.net](mailto:gainsboroughtheatrecompany@talktalk.net)

### FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

01724 702196

[pdickerson69@hotmail.com](mailto:pdickerson69@hotmail.com)

### ALL SAINTS CHURCH, PARISH ADMINISTRATOR

07395 942778

### GAINSBOROUGH OLD HALL

01427 677348

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/  
gainsborough-old-hall/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/gainsborough-old-hall/)

### GAINSBOROUGH LIBRARY

01522 782010

[gainsborough.library@gll.org](http://gainsborough.library@gll.org)

### MAYFLOWER PILGRIMS INFORMATION

[info@pilgrimroots.org](mailto:info@pilgrimroots.org)

### TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

[www.gainsboroughheritage.co.uk/townscape-  
heritage-initiative/](http://www.gainsboroughheritage.co.uk/townscape-heritage-initiative/)

### DISCOVER GAINSBOROUGH WEBSITE

[www.discovergainsborough.com](http://www.discovergainsborough.com)



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