

# RAF Skellingthorpe History Walk

## Route Summary

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A history walk of approximately 3.5 miles around the site of RAF Skellingthorpe. Devised by Nick Grimshaw of North Kesteven Walking for Health Group for the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe.

## Route Overview

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Category: Walking

Rating: Unrated

Surface: Moderate

Date Published: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019

Difficulty: Easy

Length: 5.44km / 3.38 miles

Last Modified: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019



RAF Skellingthorpe opened in 1941 on a field previously called Black Moor, approximately 2.5 miles (4 km) southeast from the village of Skellingthorpe under the control of RAF Bomber Command

The airfield consisted of the standard pattern of three runways, with one Type B1 and two Type T2 hangars. Nissen huts were used for accommodation.

No. 50 Squadron RAF, equipped with Hampdens, was the first squadron based at Skellingthorpe, with the first detachment of personnel arriving shortly before the runways were complete. They were followed by No. 455 Squadron RAAF (also flying Hampdens), however this squadron moved to RAF Wigsley shortly afterwards.

The 50 Squadron Hampdens were replaced with Avro Manchesters in April 1942, then, in June 1942, Skellingthorpe was closed for runway extensions to cope with the Squadron's conversion to new Avro Lancaster aircraft. The squadron returned in October 1942.

In November 1943 a further bomber squadron, No. 61 Squadron RAF operating Avro Lancasters, arrived at Skellingthorpe, and remained until February 1944 after which it transferred to RAF Coningsby in order for accommodation to be built on the Doddington Road side of Skellingthorpe airfield. It then returned to RAF Skellingthorpe in April 1944 and remained there until the end of the war.

463 Squadron RAAF moved to RAF Skellingthorpe on 3 July 1945 with Lancaster Mk I and III from RAF Waddington.

During the war the tally of bombers lost or failed to return from Skellingthorpe reached 208: 15 Hampdens, six Manchesters and 187 Lancasters. In 1981, former Chief of the Air Staff, Marshal of the Royal Air Force

Sir Michael Beetham, who had flown Lancasters from Skellingthorpe during the war, unveiled a memorial on the site to commemorate the 1,984 men killed flying from the airfield during the Second World War.

## Waypoints

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### Start at the Memorial

(53.21667; -0.60217)



Start this walk at War Memorial on Birchwood Avenue in front of the Car Park of Birchwood Leisure Centre.

Across the road from this memorial in the school grounds, there once stood the Control Tower - sadly now demolished.

### 1 Car Park Access to Anson Way

(53.21665; -0.60165)



From upper car park keep to the left and enter the playing field along a small stretch of tarmac road. This is the last remaining stretch of Anson Way.



## 2 Squadron Offices Base

(53.21693; -0.60101)



Unfortunately, this is all that remains of the Squadron Offices - a concrete base.

## 3 Latrine

(53.21701; -0.60084)



This concrete base is all that remains of the latrines.

#### 4 Air Raid Shelter.

(53.21717; -060043)



Rather overgrown air raid shelters

#### 5 Armoury

(53.21730; -0.59995)



This concrete base is all that remains of the Armoury. From this point you can cross the field and walk the length of the Perimeter Track or follow the line of Fulmer Road around the All-Weather Sports Ground and follow the tree line the opposite side.



## 6 View across playing field

(53.21679; -0.60041)



To read the history of this RAF Base and for the best view of the Perimeter Road, walk the full length of the road. Cross diagonally over the field towards the top end of the car park - where you started from.

## 7 Perimeter Track

(53.21621; -0.60103)

If you walk the full length of this perimeter track, you will be able to read a brief history of this RAF base.



## 8 Perimeter Track

(53.21621; -0.60103)



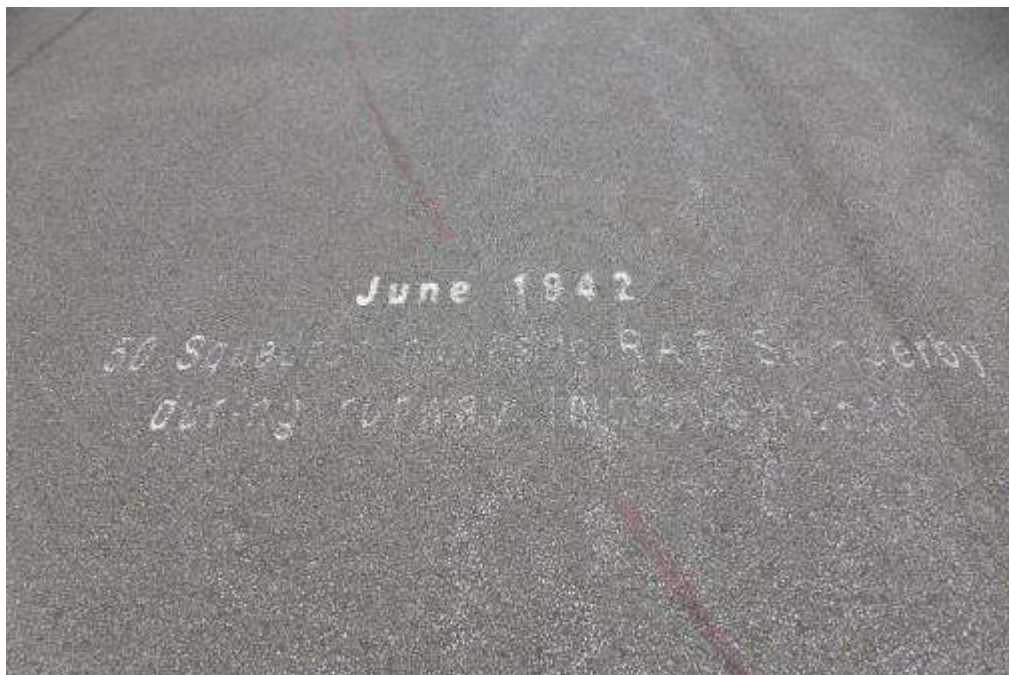
## 9 Perimeter Track

(53.21632; -0.60076)



## 10 Perimeter Track

(53.21640; -0.60065)





## 11 Perimeter Track

(53.21646; -0.60056)



## 12 Perimeter Track

(53.21648; -0.60042)



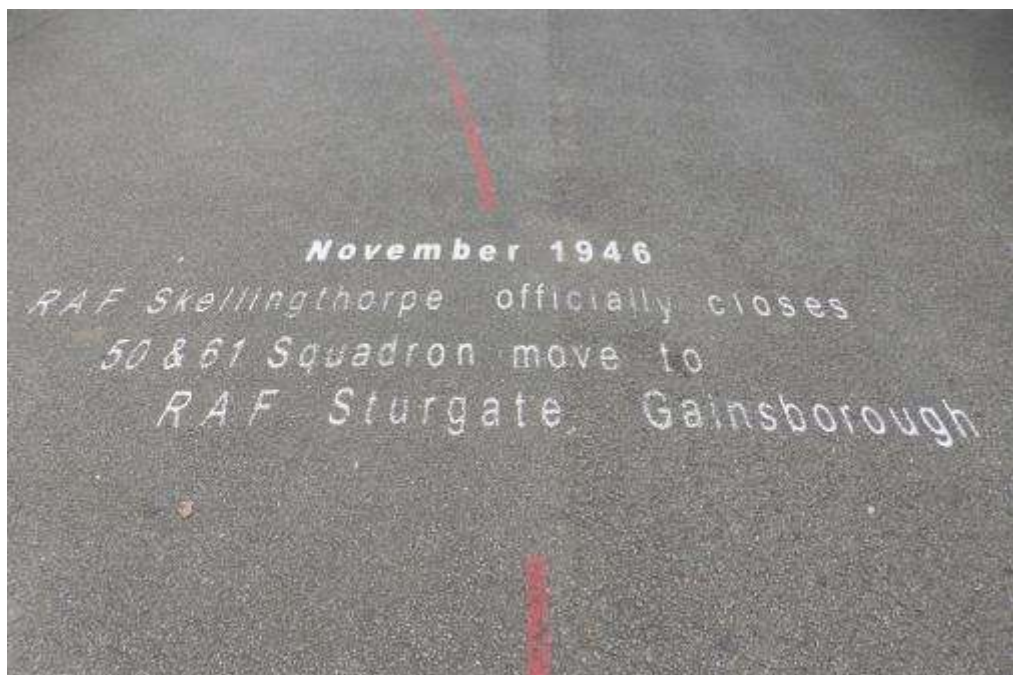
### 13 Perimeter Track

(53.21649; -0.60029)



### 14 Perimeter Track

(53.21652; -0.60017)





## 15 Perimeter Track

(53.21657; -0.60012)



## 16 View of Perimeter Track from the Fulmer Road end.

(53.21693; -0.59900)



Since the installation of the new all-weather sport grounds, this is now the view from the Fulmer Road end.

## 17 Main Runway

(53.21563; -0.59942)



Remnants of Main Runway can be seen along the tree line at this point. Afterwards, turn right towards Birchwood Leisure Centre Car Park and carry on passed the main entrance to Birchwood Avenue.

## Turn Left

(53.21646; -0.60234)

Turn left and walk along Birchwood Avenue up to the Zebra Crossing

## Turn Right & cross the road

(53.21494; -0.60307)

Cross road at zebra crossing

## Turn Right

(53.21499; -0.60329)

Walk toward Jasmin Road

## Turn left down Jasmin Road

(53.21510; -0.60327)

Follow Jasmin Road the full length to Woodfield Road

## Cross over Woodfield Road & turn left

(53.21887; -0.60930)

Turn left & follow Woodfield Road to Luton Close (Just past the Bus Stop but on other side of the road)



## Turn Right into Luton Close

(53.21846; -0.61008)

Take the small opening with railings through into Luton Close down to Staverton Crescent.

## Turn Left

(53.21914; -0.61109)



On Staverton Crescent turn left and walk on a few metres to opening between houses on your right.

## 18 Access Road

(53.21900; -0.61146)

This point is where the access road starts and goes onto the loading bays and bomb dumps. During WW2 this road would have been a hive of activity as this was the main access road to the bomb dump situated the other side of the A46 Lincoln Bypass.

Coordinates: 492808, 370012

Grid Ref: SK92807001

## 19 Bomb Dump Access Road

(53.21922; -0.61172)



During WW2 this road would have been a hive of activity as this was the main access road to the bomb dump which was situated on the other side of the A46 - Lincoln Bypass.

## 20 Bomb Dump Access Road - Junction

(53.22015; -0.61290)



From this point you can see the road to the Loading Ramps and also the road to the bomb dump that are situated in the woods on the other side of the A46 bypass (Skellingthorpe Plantation). Coordinates: 492722, 370137 Grid Reference: 92727013



## 21 View towards Skellingthorpe Plantation

(53.22048; -0.61300)



## 22 View of perimeter track to bomb dump

(53.22049; -0.61292)



Once you viewed this area retrace your steps a few metres and take the track on your right as shown in Figure: 20 Bomb Dumb Access road – Junction. (53.22015; -0.61290)

## 23 Loading Ramps

(53.21957; -0.61427)



What remains of the loading ramps can clearly be seen in this area. Coordinates: 492641, 370098  
Grid Reference: SK92647000



## 24 End of Secondary Runway?

(53.21651; -0.61653)



This area is believed to be the very end the secondary runway.

## Bear Left at Junction

(53.21606; -0.61687)



Follow path through wood, keeping the housing on your left until you get to a clearing.



## 25 Spoon Pan?

(53.21450; -0.61512)



This area is believed to be all that remains of one of the Spoon Pans immediately behind the houses as you approach Wentworth Way play area.

## 26 Bomb Shelter Approach

(53.21424; -0.61469)





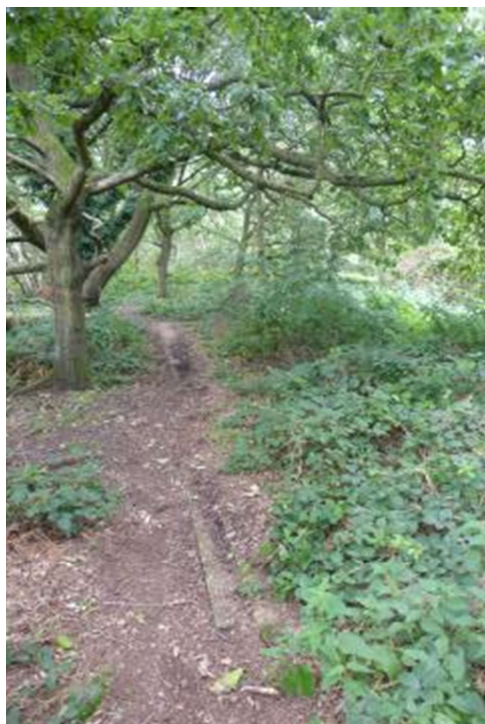
## 27 Air Raid Shelter

(53.21417; -0.61468)



## 28 Wentworth Way Play Area Structure

(53.21395; -0.61487)



Believed to be Hut 133 - a general purpose hut.  
When finished viewing, continue to T junction of paths.



## Turn right at “T-junction

(53.21384; -0.61409)



## Bear Left at “V” Junction

(53.21378; -0.61418)



Bear left at after a few metres and follow the small path that runs behind the housing estate keeping the fencing to your left. Take care as it can get overgrown and there is also a drainage ditch.



## 29 Old Air Raid Shelter

(53.20935; -0.61328)



(53.21224; -0.61176) – Grid Ref: SK92806924



A pretty much intact air raid shelter but suffering the ravages of time.

When finished viewing take the cinder track into the park with the housing estate behind you. (53.20935; 0.61328)



## Bear left at the “V” Junction

(53.21220; -0.61339)



## Turn right after the Squirrel

(53.21100; -0.61333)



## Signal Pan Approach

(53.20976; -0.61486)



Bear left at Junction to enter signal Pan



### 30 Signal Pan

(53.20959 -0.61496)



This circular piece of concrete is the Main runway Signal Pan. Once you have finished viewing turn around and retrace your steps back to the "T" Junction. Turn left and pass the wooden steps on your left and walk straight on.

### 31 End of Main Runway

(53.20819; -0.61588)





(53.20812; -0.61586)



One or two of the brilliant carvings that can be found in this park and along your history walk.

At this point look out for the information board about RAF Skellingthorpe.

From this point follow the meandering path behind the bears and keep as best as you can to the right hand side of the woodland pathway –that is always keeping the housing to your right and in sight. You are heading for an area of the park at the back of Chedburgh Close & Witchford Road.

### Small picnic area

(53.20819; -0.61588)



As you approach the picnic area bear left before the table and follow the path for a few metres to a opening on your right.

## Turn right

(53.21003; -0.61103)



Turn right and enter the concrete area.

## 32 Last remaining piece of Main Runway

(53.21017; -0.61132)



This is one of the few remaining bits of the Main Runway the only other fragments are on the sports field at Birchwood Leisure Centre. Grid Ref: SK92836902

When finished viewing go across the small piece of runway to the footpath the other side turn right and walk down to the railings.



### 33 Talk on Leslie Manser

(53.21069; -0.61106)

Leslie Thomas Manser, VC (11 May 1922 - 31 May 1942) was a British Bomber pilot and a recipient of the Victoria Cross, which was awarded posthumously following an attack on the German city of Cologne.

For the 1,000 bomber raid on Cologne on the night of 30 May 1942, Manser was captain and first pilot of Avro Manchester bomber 'D' for Dog. As he came over the target, his aircraft was caught in searchlights and although he bombed the target successfully from 7,000 ft (2,100 m) it was hit by flak. In an effort to escape the anti-aircraft fire he took violent evasive action, this reduced his altitude to only 1,000 ft (300 m) but he did not escape the flak until he was clear of the city. By this time the rear gunner was wounded, the front cabin full of smoke and the port engine overheating. Rather than abandon the aircraft and be captured, Manser tried to get the aircraft and crew to safety. The port engine then burst into flames, burning the wing and reducing airspeed to a dangerously low level. The crew made preparations to abandon the aircraft, by then barely controllable and with a crash inevitable. The aircraft was by now over Belgium, and Manser ordered the crew to bail out but refused the offer of a parachute for himself. He remained at the controls and sacrificed himself in order to save his crew. As the crew parachuted down they saw the bomber crash in flames into a dyke at Bree, 13 mi (21 km) north east of Genk in Belgium.

Pilot Officer Barnes was taken prisoner, but Sergeant Baveystock, Pilot Officer Horsley, Sergeant King, Sergeant Mills and Sergeant Naylor all evaded capture and made their way back to the United Kingdom. The testimonies of the five evaders were instrumental in the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross for Manser.

On part of the old RAF Skellingthorpe airfield from which Manser flew his last sortie, a new primary school was built. It was opened in 1981 and named the Leslie Manser Primary School. On 31 June 2004 Memorial to Manser was unveiled in natural domain the 'Zig', Stamproolerbroek near Molenbeersel, Kinrooi in the north-east of Belgium.

Manser's Victoria Cross is on display in the Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum, London.

### Turn Left

(53.21066; -0.61106)

Follow railings and exit the park to bring you out on Kingsdown Road. Continue down to Woodfield Road.

### Turn Left

(53.21258; -0.60887)

Turn left on to Woodfield Avenue. Cross over road wherever safe. Continue down Woodfield Avenue and crossover Aldergrove Crescent.

### Bear Right

(53.21343; -0.60954)

Once you have crossed over Aldergrove take the footpath going across the green to your right. Keep on this path across the green and you should be able to see the shopping precinct straight ahead. Continue on this path past the shops brings you to Jasmin Road (53.21538; 0.60411)

### Shops

(53.21512; -0.60489)

You have a choice of coffee or carry straight on. If you can carry on to Jasmin Road and onto the Zebra Crossing or through shops for a break and then back to the Zebra Crossing that you crossed at the beginning of the walk.

### Turn Left at Zebra Crossing

(53.21494; -0.60307)

Turn left and walk on to Leisure Centre

## Finish - Birchwood Leisure Centre

(53.21640; -0.60219)

At the Leisure Centre you will find a rather good and comfortable cafe plus the usual toileting facilities. More importantly, you will also find an excellent display of RAF Skellingthorpe's history with a supporting interactive computer terminal. Here you can search the records for all manner of things relating to the base, including individual airman records, flight logs etc. Best of all it's all free.

If you enjoyed this walk, why not try the second part of this walk covering the Bomb Dump area and Loading Ramps on the other side of the A46 Lincoln Bypass. It starts from the Community Centre Car Park in Skellingthorpe and is also about 3 miles long.