

THEMELTHORPE LOOP



The Themelthorpe Curve linked two lines previously owned by rival networks. Midland & Great Northern (M&GN) trains ran north-south, Great Eastern Railway (GER) trains ran east-west. Until 1960 the trains belonging to the M&GN crossed over those of its competitor, the GER, on an iron girder bridge.

The Themelthorpe Curve's construction under British Rail halved the journey time for industrial freight across Norfolk. It was the sharpest bend on the UK network; so tight that trains were limited to 10 mph to avoid derailment!

The extraordinary St. Michael the Archangel's Church at Booton was constructed between 1876 and 1900. It was designed by the Rev. Whitwell Elwin. He had no specialist training but possessed a vivid imagination.

Elwin toured England with two ladies, Miss Holley and Miss Roberts, to seek inspiration from other religious buildings. During this period, Elwin's wife lived quietly in the rectory, which had been constructed using funds from her dowry. The house remained undecorated, with no curtains, carpets or heating; apparently to her own evangelical liking. The church, in contrast had ornate fittings and spectacular stained glass, which is supposed to feature the portraits of his favourite associates.

The famous architect Sir Edwin Lutyens remarked that Booton church was, '*very naughty but built in the right spirit*'.

The church was declared redundant in 1961 and is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. It can still be enjoyed as an eccentric location for champing parties (church-camping).

The bridge of the M&GN crossing the GER line near Themelthorpe, circa 1950. Image courtesy of Stuart McPherson.

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Square : young woodlands along the route. Circle: badgers live close by.



Once a railway, Marriott's Way has been reclaimed by nature. Railway bridges with girders or brick arches remain, however grassy verges and young hardwood trees now provide rich habitats for flora and fauna. Along this walk you'll discover the scrapes and tunnel entrances of the largest badger sett in Norfolk.

Good to Know: Start this walk at Whitwell & Reepham Station (NR10 4GA) or Kerri's Farmhouse Pine (NR10 4LJ); where you can pop in for refreshments. There are places to park in Reepham, Cawston and at both old stations.

A reliable but infrequent bus service connects Reepham with Norwich.

