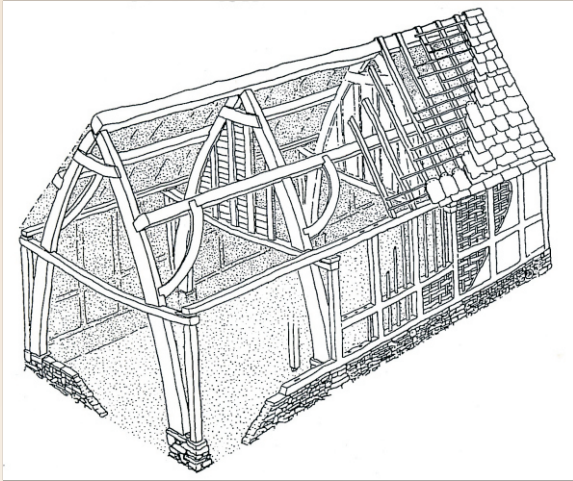


The Whirlow Hall Farm Heritage Trail



Feature 1 on the trail.



Artist's impression of what the cruck barn may have looked like prior to it being infilled with stone.



Pencil drawing of the Elizabethan hall demolished in 1852.

Feature 3 on the trail.



Volunteers excavating the Roman supply centre and some of the pottery discovered.



Feature 15 on the trail.



Two images of Whirlow Green and the ponds that were located on the bend of Broad Elms Lane in what is now the car park.

Heritage Trail (Approximately 1½ - 2 hours)

Directions for the trail are given in green and the historical features are numbered.
You may encounter farm animals so please remember the country code and close all gates.
You must climb stiles and the woodland path is not suitable for young children or the infirm.

Leave the car park by the bottom exit and turn right towards the farm buildings. Enter the first courtyard on your left where the shop is.

- ① The historic nucleus of Whirlow Hall Farm is situated around two courtyards. The oldest remains are the remnants of earlier timber-framed buildings. Go in the cruck barn (café) and you can see curving timber frames springing from the later stone walls. These are called cruck beams and date from medieval times. The Georgian farm cottage can be seen at the far end of the lower courtyard and was built in c. 1720. **Exit the lower yard and turn left on the lane and then enter the top yard.**

The Victorian Hall, built in 1854, is located directly opposite you as you enter the upper courtyard. The medieval timber hall was replaced by a stone one in the later 16th century, which was demolished in 1852. There is a carved stone head in the barn wall in this upper courtyard which appears to be wearing a Tudor ruff and may have come from the earlier, stone built hall. Other farm buildings to look at here are a dovecote (accessed through the arch next to the offices) and a pig sty (to the right of the entrance).

Exit the yard back onto the lane and turn left for about 50m. You will go past farm buildings and through the gate. At the junction at the top of the lane, turn left through the small gate to the Public Bridleway. This is Fenny Lane. Continue walking down the lane for about 200m until you reach a stile on your right.

- ② Fenny Lane is now a 'hollow way', which was originally a packhorse route connecting Sheffield to the Peak District. A hollow way, or sunken lane, is a road which has, over time, been worn lower than the land on either side. This is why the path is lower than the surrounding fields and hedges. Walking down this lane gives you a good idea of travelling conditions prior to the turnpike (toll) roads of the late 18th century.

- ③ In the field opposite the stile is the site of a Roman supply centre. Archaeological excavations took place (creating the turf wall) in the summer of 2011 to examine a buried rectangular enclosure with two entrances identified by a geophysical survey. The enclosure was found to define a large Roman estate centre with stone-founded buildings tightly packed into the interior. Roman pottery was found, mostly dating from the 2nd century AD, the period of the emperors Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius and a time when Roman armies pushed into northern England and occasionally southern Scotland, looking to subdue and control this area. This site may have functioned as a supply centre for the Roman army as it opens onto the ancient trackway of Fenny Lane. This lane leads towards a Roman road that ran from Brough in the Hope Valley via Ringinglow and on to the Roman fort at Templeborough on the eastern edge of Sheffield.

Go over the stile on your right and keep to the right across the field towards the modern stone cairn (man-made pile of stones). Whirlow vineyard is on your right. Just after the cairn monument, go over the stile and enter the woodland overlooking the Limb Valley. IMPORTANT – Almost immediately, after only 10–12m, you need to leave the main path running downhill. Instead, take the smaller (and occasionally steep-sided) path leading up to the top of the valley edge. Remain on this path (for about 20 minutes) keeping within a few yards of the tree line and fence to your right until you come to some wooden steps.

- ④ The steep-sided Limb Valley has always been an important feature within the landscape here at Whirlow. The valley acted as a natural route for both animals and humans and gave access from the main Sheaf valley below on to the high moorlands above.

Flint tools of the early hunter-gatherers who lived in Britain around 10,000 years ago have been found here. These suggest people would have used the edge of the valley as a vantage point to hunt a variety of animals (such as wild pig, red and roe deer). They would have also trapped fish in the Limb Brook, and taken honey and nesting birds and their eggs from the rich woodland that would have mantled much of this area. We know from historical records that this steep valley served as an important border between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia, but it is also thought to be a border going back much further in history, having probably formed the northern border of the Roman Empire until they pushed north in AD 78, and before that as a border between Iron Age kingdoms.

This valley edge path brings you to some wooden steps. Go up these steps and over the stile onto Bole Hill. The next stile is just 30m or so ahead of you.

- ⑤ The fields that you enter after coming out of the wooded valley were used during the late medieval period onwards for lead smelting. Bole Hill, on which you are standing, is named after the lead smelting pits ('boles') that would have been found across this part of the field. The hill is 290m above sea level and would have offered a windy, exposed location where noxious fumes from the small, charcoal-powered furnaces would have been blown away. A document from 1621 mentions John Bright's smelting house, which may be the site now known as Smeltings Farm. The Bright family is known to have occupied Whirlow Hall Farm from as early as 1303 until 1720. Also located nearby is an 18th century lead cupola: Copperas House. The cupola (lead smelting structure) manufactured 'copperas' (ferrous sulphate) from the pyritic Ringinglow Coal seam, mined nearby. The copperas solution was then used in the leather tanning industry. Smeltings Farm and Copperas House are both situated further west, up Ringinglow Road, but are in private ownership.

Follow the footpath straight ahead.

- ⑥ As you cross fields you reach the highest point on the Whirlow estate. The viewpoint here offers a panoramic view to the east along the Sheaf Valley from which Sheffield (Sheaf field) gets its name.

Pass over the stile and turn right to follow the walled edge of the field until you reach the gate and stile at the top of Coit Lane next to the school playing fields. Turn right down the lane to visit the copse of trees about 50m away – turn left if you wish to skip this short diversion. Inside the copse there are seating areas for you to enjoy a rest.

- ⑦ This patch of woodland contains a high proportion of sycamores, which were planted on the Whirlow estate as a windbreak during the 18th century. These trees are shown on a map from 1720, and species inside the copse (such as holly and ash) reveal its origins as a coppice. Coppicing is a form of woodland management, common in Britain since the medieval period; young trees are repeatedly cut down and the new growth of straight, slender poles used for building material and fuel. The woodland that surrounded Whirlow Hall Farm would have been of economic importance to the Bright family in the form of charcoal and 'white coal', which would have fuelled the lead smelting on nearby Bole Hill.

Return to Coit Lane as you leave the woodland coppice and follow the Public Bridleway around the playing fields.

- 8 The dry-stone walls around Whirlow were originally built in the late 18th century after the Enclosure Act of 1788, which enclosed open fields and common ground in the area. The walls are built from the local sandstone which was quarried nearby and are regularly repaired and maintained by farm workers. Small gaps in the base of the wall are intended to give sheep dogs access into the field. Stiles and benches built into the walls are other features to look out for.

Keep following the Public Bridleway around the playing fields and you will reach Birkdale School on your right. Turn left at the school gates to join the driveway – still signposted Public Bridleway. You will pass Castle Dyke Mews and after a further 40m or so stop when you see an entry to a field with an old wooden gate.

- 9 You are now standing approximately where an arcing ditch and bank of a very large enclosure used to cross this point of the driveway and continue into the field to the left and over towards the pond on your right. Unfortunately, the earthworks (bumps and mounds) in this area have been ploughed out or built over and are no longer visible. This site is mentioned in a document from 1655 which describes the earthworks as 'Castle Dyke'. The feature has been interpreted as a possible Iron Age fort, or enclosed site. The site has not been tested by archaeological investigation and it is possible that it could be a different type of monument, such as a medieval moated manor, for instance. The earthworks of the enclosure can be more clearly seen when you reach Ringinglow Road, on its far side. If you turn left onto Ringinglow Road and walk for about 400m past Wigley Farm, the earthworks can be seen on the opposite side of the road to Firs Farm.

Walk on as far as the main road. This is Ringinglow Road. Turn right.

- 10 Ringinglow Road is a particularly straight road that was constructed as part of a turnpike road from Sheffield to Chapel-en-le-Frith and Buxton, and opened in 1758. About a mile or so up the road in the opposite direction to your current progress is the Grade II listed octagonal former toll house, built c. 1778. The toll house stands opposite the Norfolk Arms public house, originally a coaching inn (also Grade II listed), that was built c. 1840.

Walk 200m down Ringinglow Road and just past the 'Ringinglow Gardens' cul-de-sac you reach a Public Footpath on the right. Thryft House is signed on the gateposts. Turn down this lane for a further 150m. The north-westerly corner of the Whirlow estate can be seen on the right-hand side of the lane. Thryft House is on the left.

- 11 Thryft House is a cottage first mentioned in documents from 1504 as being leased to Roger Eyre of Holme Hall near Chesterfield. The oldest building in the complex today is the Grade II listed Holly Cottage, which was built as a replacement of the original Thryft House in the 17th century. It may incorporate some remains of the original house, as thick walls were discovered during refurbishments in the 1980s.

At Thryft House fork right and enter the Whirlow estate through a gate on the right-hand side of the lane. The Westfield Residential Barn can be seen on the right.

- 12 The Westfield Residential Barn at Whirlow was built in the 1850s and probably served as a field barn for Whirlow Hall Farm. Such barns were constructed away from the main farm buildings and usually served as a hay store on the top and an animal byre below. The barn has been built into the side of the bank, which would have allowed easy access for carts to load and unload the hay stores—note the first floor doorway on the gable-end of the barn.

Go through the small gate opposite the front entrance to the Barn and walk up towards the top left corner of the field towards a large sycamore tree. Go through the gate and turn left along the footpath.

- 13 The large sycamore tree that is located in the corner of the opposite field shows signs of ancient 'pollarding'. This is a system of tree pruning; the upper branches of the tree were removed to encourage new growth on a regular basis, but at a height where livestock could not eat the new shoots. This form of woodland management has been used in Britain since the medieval period and guaranteed a supply of new wood for various purposes, but particularly for fuel and building materials. The presence of pollarding shows that this field was used for cattle grazing rather than arable agriculture during the early life of this tree.

This footpath takes you back to the central farm area in about half a mile. After 200m, with the playing fields to your right, bear left keeping to the gated path. Then, further on still, keep straight on at the next Whirlow Trails finger signpost.

- 14 The area of Whirlow Hall Farm, and the moorland onto which it abuts, was probably stripped of much of its tree cover during the Bronze and Iron Age periods. This would have been due to an expansion of farming onto higher ground, and possibly driven by an increasing population and competition for land and resources. The discovery of a large pit containing rare Iron Age pottery shows that a farming settlement has existed at Whirlow from at least 2,500 years ago. The pit was found below the Roman settlement (feature 3) but other buried remains from this period are likely to survive across the Whirlow estate.

Nearing the farm, as you approach the polytunnels, look to the left of the car park where a cluster of buildings stand on the corner of Broad Elms Lane.

- 15 Whirlow Hall and the farm were part of a larger complex of buildings that, by the end of the 17th century, included Whirlow Farm Cottage, Whirlow Farm and Rose Cottage. Together with the farm they formed a small hamlet, which stood around a green with two ponds in what is now the car park, known as Whirlow Green.

- 16 A geophysical survey showed that the last field on your right before you return to the farm has traces of slight, parallel ridges. These findings represent the traces of narrow ridge and furrow, which are the remains of ridges and troughs created by a system of ploughing used in Britain since the medieval period. These particular ridges, given that they are straight and narrow, are likely to date from the post-medieval period c. 1750.

- 17 Cottage industries, such as metalworking and woollen cloth manufacture, would have taken place in the cottages that formed Whirlow Green. The field below Rose Cottage was known as 'Tenter Meadows'. This name came from the practice of drying cloth on tenter frames. During this process the cloth was attached to the frames on tenterhooks. Its position on a south-west facing slope meant a good supply of sunshine and wind for drying the cloth.

Arrive back at the farm and enter the lane just beside the car park. There are toilets in the lower courtyard. The shop is open Wednesdays–Sundays and the café is open weekends and Bank Holidays.

