

And so this is Goole...

Where is it ?

Goole, with a population of about 20,000, lies at the confluence of the Rivers Ouse and Don. It is the UK's furthest inland port, linked to the North Sea, 45 miles to the east, by the River Ouse and the Humber Estuary.

Administratively, from Viking times up to 1974, it was in the West Riding of Yorkshire. With boundary reorganisation in 1974 it found itself in the newly-created county of Humberside. Humberside itself was abolished in 1996 and from then Goole has been in the revived East Riding of Yorkshire. Goole is in the parliamentary constituency of Brigg & Goole and the present MP is Andrew Percy (Conservative). The town's landscape is mostly made up of utility and industrial structures. Apart from the numerous cranes in the docks, three structures stand out because of their elevation: the two water towers, of different eras, to the west of Lower Bridge Street, and the spire of St John the Evangelist, Goole Parish Church, on Church Street. These three have become the iconic symbols of Goole as they can be seen from miles around.

Surroundings

The surrounding land is very low-lying and at times can be prone to flooding. South of the River Ouse are The Marshlands, containing such settlements as Old Goole, Swinefleet, Reedness, Whitgift and Ousefleet. These are lands which, by the command of Charles I, were drained by the Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden, primarily to extend and give better access to the hunting lands of Hatfield Chase but, in the process, creating some of the most productive arable land in the UK, stretching many miles southwards through the Isle of Axholme and North Lincolnshire. Locals will tell you that the land is so flat that if your dog runs away you can still see it running three days later ! Large industrial buildings near the M62 motorway are a Tesco main distribution centre and a glassworks. In the near future an adjacent site, a bit nearer the docks, will be occupied by a massive new investment by Siemens, where trains will be built. Vermuyden's drainage and canalization work made it possible for barges to navigate to the south Yorkshire coalfields and, in later centuries, to the industrial West Riding. This led to the growth of the town of Goole. Unusually in the history of English place names, Goole didn't get its name from Old English or Old Norse but from the later Middle English, its first mention being in 1362 as *Gulle*, meaning stream, channel or outlet drain.

Places of Interest

The Lowther Hotel, on Aire Street, was reputedly the first building in the area known as New Goole. Since the burning down of the Royal Clarence hotel in Exeter, the Lowther has an arguable claim to be the oldest hotel in England, using the criterion of the date at which the French term 'hotel' was applied. The building, dating from 1824, had fallen into disrepair and was massively and sympathetically restored by local entrepreneurs Howard and Julie Duckworth. If you happen to be in there when Howard is around, you might be able to persuade him to show you the fascinating fresco murals on the walls of an upper floor.

The Waterways Museum

The Waterways Museum lies close to the Dutch River (which is really an extension of the River Don but has acquired its name for obvious reasons). However, it is a bit out on a limb and not easy to reach unless you are a good walker or have a vehicle. At summer weekends they sometimes run boat trips around the docks.

Whitgift Church

You are only likely to get to Whitgift by vehicle. Leave Goole by Bridge Street and Swinefleet Road and keep going, following the signs. The original church was built around 1150 AD but fires, collapses and rebuilding

mean that little is left of the original building. There are a couple of notable things about the Church of Mary Magdalene, Whitgift. Inside is the tomb of a nun, which is orientated north to south, rather than the customary Christian west to east. It is said that this was done because the nun "...had been a naughty girl" Use your imagination ! The other significant feature of the church is that the clock face has a figure XIII where the XII should be. No one really knows how this happened in the first place but successive clock faces have always been given a XIII instead of XII. During World War Two, the traitor and Nazi sympathizer William Joyce (Lord Haw Haw), in his propaganda broadcasts from Germany, would sometimes boast that the Luftwaffe would "...bomb the Hull docks, fly over the thirteen o'clock and bomb Goole docks" in an attempt to demoralize the British and get us to think that the Germans knew every little detail about our country. After the war we hanged him !

Goole Museum

This is located above the library. Amongst the curator staff you will sometimes find Alfred Willams, who recently came second in the finals of Mastermind.

Blacktoft Sands Nature Reserve

This important RSPB reserve is to be found on the banks of the River Ouse, to the east of Ousefleet. Again, take Swinefleet Road out of Goole and just keep going, following the Blacktoft Sands signs.

Walking Through the Docks

Goole is probably the only working docks that the public has a right to walk through. There is always something interesting to see in the activities of the docks. Part of the route takes you over the lock gates and sometimes you can be lucky enough to encounter a sea-going ship arriving or leaving. The route is shown on the map. Dotted around the streets of dockland are paintings by Reuben Chappel (1870-1940) who was Goole's own 'pier head' artist. Look out for them. You can also indulge in a bit of ship-spotting. Ships from the Scandinavian countries, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, in particular, are frequent visitors to Goole and can be seen loading and unloading. Identify them by their flags (but this is not always straightforward as many ships sail under 'flags of convenience', such as Panama, Cyprus and Malta, rather than under flags of their home countries !). As a courtesy, all visiting ships also fly the Union Jack or the 'Red Duster' (British Merchant Navy flag). I've seen seals swimming around in these docks.



The Danish vegetable oil carrier Silver Kenna entering the locks from the River Ouse (right) and emerging into Goole Docks (left).

In the left-hand picture, the footpath to cross the locks can be seen between the two sets of railings.