

Great Things to see in Thornton in Lonsdale

1. What's in a name?

St Oswald's church in Thornton-in-Lonsdale may have ancient origins, and the etymology of local place names indicates roots in the early medieval past. 'Torne' or 'Torn' comes from the Old English word for a hawthorn-tree and -tun is the Old English for an enclosure, farmstead, or village.

2. A literary landscape - the Conan Doyle and Bronte connection

St Oswald's is a Grade II* listed church set amongst the striking Yorkshire Dales National Park and is a hill farming landscape, a short walk from the Ingleton Water Falls walk and along a variety of other hiking routes recently published in the Westhouse Walks Pamphlet. Successive generations of writers and artists have been inspired by this rugged terrain. Two greats, Conan Doyle and the Brontë sisters, both lived and moved through Thornton-in-Lonsdale as they penned their classics. The former married his first wife, Louisa Hawkes, at St Oswald's in 1886, and lived for a time at Masongill Cottage, 1.5 miles down the road. The Brontës attended school in the nearby Cowan Bridge, with their coach back to Haworth reportedly stopping outside St Oswalds. What will this landscape evoke in you? Perhaps words will come tumbling down the hillsides and onto your notebook? Or perhaps this rugged terrain will make you think about your favourite books in a different light?

3. A place to pause and remember - enter through the Lychgate

The church is approached through a recently restored ornate lychgate, erected in 1904 by the late John Charles Walker of Ingleton, in memory of his beloved wife, who is sadly not named. Unhook the gate, and enter.

4. A stone witness.. our Medieval Tower

Towering above you is the only part of the original medieval church that survives today, constructed in the 15th century and still a key feature of the building. While impressive when viewed from the churchyard, why not take a closer look at the stonework and feel its rugged, weathered surface - a witness to centuries of worship.

5. A fire and a rebuilding - the Paley and Austin connection

Following a fire that burnt down most of the building on the 25th February 1933, the body of the church you see now was rebuilt by the renowned Lancaster architects, Paley and Austin and finished in 1935. It was rebuilt as a replica of the 1870 church (minus the crypt), and three 'Norman' arches were included on the north side of the nave. Can you spot them?

6. Stained glass - look west and east!

As you enter the building your eye will be drawn to the ornate stained glass. The windows in the Gothic tower date back to 1872 and depict Moses receiving the Commandments on Mount Sinai. While much of the stained glass was lost in multiple fires, impressive designs also survive on the east windows. Which is your favourite?

7. A surviving gem...

Thanks to a legacy from the famous antiquarian and philanthropist Felix Slade, the founder of the Slade School of Art, a beautiful angelic head was rescued from the rubble of the partially burned out church in 1935, and installed in the new East window where it is helpfully labelled. In light of its story, the angelic head could perhaps be seen as taking on a reflective hue..a testament to St. Oswald's resilience through the centuries.

8. Twelfth century cross slab

As you turn your gaze from the window, notice the 12th century cross slab. Recovered in the 20th century but dating back to the 1100s, this funerary monument was likely that of an influential landowning local person, probably the Lord of the Manor. It originally had a cross in the centre with the sword and 'coulter' (a knife) of the deceased, indicating his right to bear arms and status as a landowner.

The cross slab can be found in the Redmayne chapel (east end of the south aisle). The Redmaynes were an influential family in the local area with famous namesakes across the world. According to Church Registers, between 1578 and 1847 no fewer than 164 family members were baptised here and the earliest memorials in the church dating to 1678 are associated with the Redmayne family. We're currently restoring this chapel and would be very grateful for any donations towards it.

9. The 'Mowbray tomb'

Another powerful family with close connections to the church are the Mowbrays, and their family tomb still lies in the church. During the Norman Conquest of the 11th century, the powerful family rebuilt the original church in Romanesque style. They also converted the established early medieval fortification in nearby Burton into a Norman style motte-and-bailey castle with a garrison, around which the present village of Burton developed. The motte is still climbed annually on Good Friday by the local congregations of Thornton and Burton, who jointly erect a cross together following the service. Do go and visit our sister church in Burton, too!

10. Rare survivals - our Funeral Bier and village stocks

Before you leave, make sure to notice the funeral bier located near the west end of the building. This simple English bier would have been used to carry bodies for burial in a funeral procession. Another rare survival just outside the church wall on the Dent Road is a set of stocks, a reminder of local ways of keeping the peace in the past!

We hope you've enjoyed this tour of our favourite things in Thornton and we'd love to welcome you to visit St. Oswald's in person, where you will find a warm welcome, whether you are a visitor or would like to join us for a very special service or concert. Our church is open from April to September Wednesday to Saturday from 10am to 5pm. A regular Sunday Service is held all year round at 9.30am.

Why not combine your visit with a great pub lunch or supper at our friends across the road, [The Marton Arms](#). This Grade II listed building dates back to 1679 and offers a warm welcome (Tel 01524 242 204 or email hello@martonarms.co.uk)