

Our agricultural inheritance

Farming is the focus of this year's Heritage Open Days taking place this month

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS: David Robinson



Sibsey Trader windmill

FARMING IN LINCOLNSHIRE is the theme of this year's Heritage Open Days over the weekend of Friday to Monday, 10th to 13th September. There are more than seventy-five openings of historic buildings, guided walks and special events to celebrate our local heritage.

The weekend actually starts with the Thursday Market at the Louth Livestock Centre, the last one still operating in Lincolnshire. There will be three guided tours in the morning, for which you need to book – and remember to bring your wellies.

As you would expect, the weekend includes a number of farm and countryside walks. There is Vine House Farm, Deeping St Nicholas, where Nicholas Watts has won conservation awards, plus his exhibition of farming hand tools (and a similar exhibition at Scopwick). In the centre of the county is a walk round Grange Farm, East Barkwith, another award winner. Other farm walks are at Brickyard Farm, Wrangle, with George Danby and his organic farming system, the Guy's Hospital Estate at Sutton Bridge, Frank's Meadows at Manby, and farm buildings and crops in Holland Fen.

Special attractions related to farming can be found at Stoke Rochford with Victorian farm buildings, the Withcall farm museum, farmsteads at Harmston, farm memorabilia at Coningsby Moor-side, a demonstration of dry stone



The modern colour of farming at Scamblesby in the Wolds



Reclamation bank at Kirton Marsh



Brackenborough deserted medieval village

walling at Old Hall Farm, Caenby, and farming exhibitions at Burgh le Marsh and at nearby Church Farm Museum, Skegness, where there is a weekend festival of food and drink.

Land has to be drained, so there is the opportunity to visit pumping engines at Lade Bank on the Hobhole Drain and Gayton le Marsh near the Great Eau. Corn has to be ground, so you can visit windmills at Sibsey – the six-sailed Trader – Waltham and the Ellis Mill in Lincoln, and the Cogglesford watermill in Sleaford will have demonstrations on beekeeping.

Unusual events and special for this year are guided walks along the former Bicker Haven where there are remains of medieval saltworks, and along the reclamation sea banks of Kirton Marsh, plus new Wolds walks starting from Belchford, and agricultural heritage walks at Willoughton and Welbourn, the latter including the working blacksmith's forge.

We are fortunate in Lincolnshire in having people with local knowledge who enjoy leading walks round their villages and parish fields. There is a wide choice available: Burton on Stather, Bottesford, including springs and wells, Crowland, Heighington and Kirton Lindsey, plus talks at Corby Glen and on the history of the Lincolnshire Agricultural Show on the Showground. There is also an archaeological walk at Swineshead, an exploration of Ropsley Wood and of the remarkable preserved grass banks of the Iron Age hill fort at Honington (one of Lincolnshire's secret places which is well worth including in your itinerary), and an open day at the Burton Hunt kennels at Riseholme.

Lincoln as usual has a number of attractions: the Museum of Lincolnshire Life with many elements related to agriculture, a display of field books at Lincolnshire Archives, an agriculture past and present display at St Mary Magdalene, plus visits to Monk's Abbey, St Mary's Guildhall, the Tithe Barn on Greestone Steps, and guided walks of the hidden city and Victorian Lincoln.

Churches with special openings this year include the unique timber design of Sir Ninian Comper at Gosberton Clough, St Mary's Horncastle, St Mary's Marshchapel, at Cleethorpes Corpus

Christi and St Andrew's Methodist (in their silver jubilee year), St Wulfram's, Grantham, and tucked away in the Wolds is St Leonard's Haugh, with a Festival of the Countryman's Year. Also, St Botolph's Boston, in association with town heritage trails.

The range of events is not confined to farming. There is a chance to explore the industrial heritage of the Humber Bank and the tile works at Barton, Edlington's Engineering Works at Gainsborough, Immingham Museum, open days at RAF College, Cranwell and the Aviation Centre, and the Operations Room at RAF Digby are always popular, and there is an open day at Woolsthorpe Manor, birthplace of Sir Isaac Newton. Of particular note is the opening of the Jacobean Dowsby Hall with fine gardens and views of the fens – the birthplace of 'The Archers'.

Finally, what about farming and farmers long past? There are guided walks of the deserted medieval villages at Beesby,

North Cadeby and Brackenborough, plus an illustrated talk on lost villages of Lincolnshire at Jews' Court in Lincoln and of the expansion into the former open fields at Stamford. At the other end of the county is the chance to explore the strip farming system still operating at Epworth.

To accompany all these opportunities, Heritage Lincolnshire is publishing an illustrated booklet, 'Farming in Lincolnshire 3000BC to 2000AD' focusing on the landscape, innovations and advances in agriculture in the county, including the story of the Lincolnshire Agricultural Society.

Please note that some events must be pre-booked as numbers have to be limited. Details are in the Heritage Open Days leaflet available from Tourist Information Centres, libraries and other outlets. In case of difficulty, please telephone Elizabeth Bates at Heritage Lincolnshire before the Open Days weekend on 01529 461499. □



Church Farm Museum, Skegness



Lade Bank pumping station on Hobhole Drain