



DOWN YOUR WAY

Clifftop neighbours

The pretty villages of Navenby and Wellingore lie just a mile apart at the top of the 'cliff'

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Below: St Peter's Church, Navenby MIKE COWEN

Opposite page from top: Navenby's stone buildings are the perfect backdrop for the village's pretty gardens JOHN SMITH; *All Saints' Church, Wellingore* JOHN WHITTAKER



Situated high on the cliff top, nine miles south of Lincoln, is the pretty village of Navenby. Archaeological evidence reveals there have been people living on the site since the Bronze Age and the remains of Iron Age farms have been found close by. These remains are so important they are now protected as an area of public open space and are managed by the Navenby Archaeology Group.

The Romans' Ermine Street, known locally as the High Dyke, ran less than a quarter of a mile to the east of the present day village and it is thought there were shops and houses at either side at this point. Although no longer a main thoroughfare, Ermine Street can still be seen here in the form of green lanes alternating with stretches of minor roads. During the Roman era Navenby was a half a day's march from Lindum Colonia and this would have contributed to its prosperity.

By the Saxon period, the village was centred around the church, closer to the water supply. The village's name, with its 'by' ending would suggest there was a Danish settlement here.

By the middle ages, Navenby was a market town with grants from Edward the Confessor, William Rufus and Richard II. There is still evidence of this from its wide main street which had a market square at its centre. In this square was a market cross, erected in honour of Queen Eleanor but it has long gone. As well as the regular markets, two fairs were held annually in the village – a feast on the Thursday before Easter and the sheep fair on 17th October which continued until the nineteenth century – and there was a hiring fair for servants every May.

Visitors arriving at Navenby are struck first by its wide street and secondly by the village's many attractive stone buildings. Navenby lies on the limestone belt which runs across England from Dorset to Yorkshire. This limestone has a beautiful mellow colour, a good texture and has long-lasting qualities.

Unlike its surrounding villages, Navenby did not have a single lord of the manor, it was owned by the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral, and this is reflected in the wide variety of buildings in the village. There are yeoman's houses from the seventeenth century, commercial premises, shops, cottages and farm houses all close to the main street.

As with many villages, the oldest surviving building in the village is St Peter's Church. It dates back to around 1180 making it as old as the oldest parts of the Cathedral. Much of it dates from the fourteenth century and it was partially rebuilt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The tower collapsed in the mid-eighteenth century and was replaced.

The Chancel is in the Decorated style and has an Easter sepulchre which, although small, has three Roman soldiers standing at its foot along with the three Maries and the angel. It also has sedilia and a piscina which were probably built in the early fourteenth century.

In complete contrast, the font is a Victorian addition and was probably shown at the London Exhibition of 1862.

As a market town, at one time Navenby would have had many pubs but just three remain. The oldest of these is probably the King's Head, then there is the Butchers Arms. Set back from the road, this eighteenth-century building could have stood at the western side of the former market place and in its heyday was probably the best house in the village. The Lion and Royal dates from 1824 and has the distinction of having been presented with the Prince of Wales' feathers when the future Edward VII stopped there to change his clothes after hunting.

One of the later buildings in the village, and one of much humbler origins, is still nevertheless becoming a well-known tourist attraction. Mrs Smith's cottage, a simple Victorian brick-built dwelling, was lived in by Mrs Smith until 1995 when she died at the age of 102.

Mrs Smith lived without any of what



are regarded as necessities today. At the time of her death the only modern additions to her home were a cold water tap, inside toilet and electricity and these she had accepted with reluctance. The access to the bedrooms was by a ladder.

When she died, the cottage was turned into a museum which is open at various times throughout the year. For more information please contact the Sleaford Tourist Information Centre on 01529 414294.

The railway came to Navenby in 1867 and the station was built about three-quarters of a mile west of the village. It was on the Lincoln and Grantham branch of the Great Northern Railway.

A comfortable commuting distance from Lincoln, the village has continued to prosper and now, in common with many county villages, has new housing developments on its outskirts. Navenby is also fortunate in having a range of superb village shops selling everything from fresh meat and bread to clothes.

Less than a mile south of Navenby lies the village of Wellingore, the most southerly of the cliff villages. The origins of its name would suggest a Celtic settlement at the border which was also an assembly centre. An alternative interpretation of its name comes from the Anglo Saxon for a high land on which the Wealingas or Welle family settled.

Here the cliff road drops steeply away from this village giving it sweeping views across the Brant and Witham valleys. At the top of this road is All Saints' church, built on the site of an earlier Saxon church. The earliest part of the present church dates from the late twelfth century with additions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One of its bells is more than 500 years old. In the south aisle is a fifteenth century altar tomb with alabaster figures of a knight and his lady.

Close to the church are some of the village's oldest houses, dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The largest house in the village, Wellingore Hall, was once home to a branch of the Nevile family. It was built in 1750 and extended in the early nineteenth and mid-nineteenth century. It is now divided up for various uses including business and retail. In the grounds stands a Roman Catholic chapel, dedicated to St August-

tine and built in about 1882 by Geoffrey Henry Nevile Esq at a cost of about £7,000 – anything between £500,000 and £2million in today's values depending on your point of comparison.

Sadly, the first chapel did not last long – it was burned down in a fire on the afternoon of Sunday, 22nd June, 1884 but was rebuilt in 1885. The chapel has an apse and circular tower, and six stained-glass windows which were installed after the fire.

The village pub, the Marquis of Granby, was one of many named after John Manners, the Duke of Rutland. A former MP and pop-





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ular soldier he was a member of the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards and became Commander in Chief of the British Army in 1766 following the bravery with which he led his cavalry against the French in the Battle of Warburg.

After his men left the army, he liked to set them up as inn keepers and many of the Marquis of Granby pubs around the country are named after him.

The arrival of the railway at Navenby was also of benefit to nearby Wellingore and by the beginning of the last century, there were more than 120 children in the village's elementary school.

A few buildings remain to tell us more of Wellingore's past. The stump of the medieval village cross still remains on

the north side of the old village centre. The village's tower mill was built in the eighteenth century and had five more floors added in 1854. Originally a six-sailed mill it was used to grind corn until 1935 by which time it was down to just two sails. The cap was removed in 1945.

Outside the village a few pillboxes, hardstanding areas and other buildings remain from what was RAF Wellingore. This airbase opened in 1935 and was operational until 1945 at which time it was closed down.

Much of Wellingore's twentieth-century expansion took place in the 1960s and today this is a peaceful village, popular among the retired.

Below: The Marquis of Granby, Wellingore
JOHN SMITH

Right: Navenby's High Street is an eclectic mix of buildings JOHN SMITH

Bottom: Wellingore's All Saints' Church is a familiar landmark high on the cliff JOHN SMITH

