

# Walk Through the History of Lincoln's Lower High Street

## HIGH STREET HIGHLIGHTS

WALK  
1



A circular  
walk of  
approximately  
0.8 miles  
that can be  
completed  
in 30 - 45  
minutes



**A fun walk around some of the lesser known  
historical and architectural features of  
Lincoln High Street.**

Lincoln High Street is over a thousand years old and if you take a moment to look above the modern shop frontages you can see glimpses into its colourful past.



# HIGH STREET HIGHLIGHTS

## WALK 1

1. The walk starts at **St Mary's Conduit**, which was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a way of supplying clean safe water to the people of Wigford parish. Prior to that, the water available was an open drain called the **Sincil Dyke**.
2. Walking north and crossing the road, we find ourselves in the **High Street** and on the west side is a tall elaborate building. Look above the modern shop frontage and you will see columns and rounded bays adorned with **mythical animals**. Take a moment to see what strange beasts you can identify. This building was original built in 1896 for Peacock and Wilson's Bank, one of several independent banks in Lincoln. The frontage was made in ceramic by Doulton of Lambeth.
3. Walking north up the High Street, on your right, there is an open space to the east called the **Cornhill**. At the end of the open space is a large classical building called the **Exchange Arcade**, built in stages from 1847 to 1880, it now houses banks and shops. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries it was used as a meeting place and market and even held fancy fairs and themed bazaars, where charities would raise money by selling craft goods from ornately decorated stalls.
4. A short distance northwest is the **Lincoln war memorial** and **St Benedict's church**. The church dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and has a tower built in the local style, giving it a Saxon appearance. This church once had the most chantries and chantry priests in the whole of Lincoln. A chantry was an altar where priests were paid to sing prayers for the soul of a particular deceased person. The gifts of land and money that paid for these would have made this a wealthy church in medieval times. Lincoln war memorial was built in 1922 as a market cross in the Gothic revival style. It contains the names of 1241 servicemen and 4 civilians who died in the two World Wars.
5. Across to the east side of the street is another elaborate building in a similar style to 2. This was built as shops and offices for Brown, Hewitt & Co in 1900 by the same architect as Peacock and Wilson's Bank. **High Street shops** at this time were centres of business operations that extended across the county and beyond and therefore the owners wanted them to look impressive and be comfortable to work in.
6. The **High Bridge** is a rare survival of **early post-medieval jettied timber framed building**, which was (and still is) used as shops. This gives an idea of what the High Street would have looked like prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Take a moment and look up and down the street imagining what it would have looked like in the past.
7. Again, looking above the shop front at the north east corner of the bridge, you can see a particularly fine example of an **Edwardian "mock Tudor" building** that was constructed on the site of the Lord Nelson Inn. As with other large buildings on the high street, this would have been a combination of shops and offices. The tower in the corner is particularly attractive.
8. The most northern part of our walk is the **Guildhall**, often known as the **Stonebow**. This was the gate that marked the southern limit of the walled lower town of Lincoln. Note the decorative style of the stonework which has been reflected in later buildings further down the High Street. The figures in the alcoves are the **Virgin Mary** (patron saint of the city) and the **Archangel Gabriel**. There are old superstitions that these statues protected the city.
9. Walking east along **Saltergate**, you will soon find yourself in a green space that was once the **site of St Swithin's church**. This was demolished in the Victorian era and a new church built just to the east.



**10.** From the northeast corner of the park, you can see across Free School Lane, past the Library building, to the medieval **Greyfriars** building. This is the last remaining building of a Franciscan Friary that was built in 1237. Originally a religious house it was closed down during the dissolution of the monasteries, and was later used as a free school and museum.

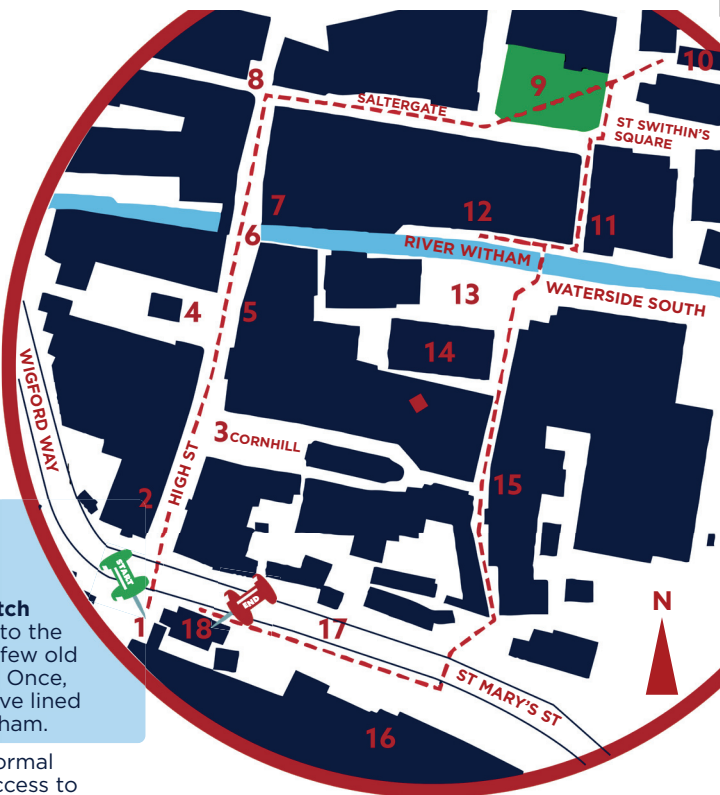
**11.** Turning south, and walking past the **Liberal Club**, once the base from which the Liberal Party fought its campaigns, there is the **Witch and the Wardrobe**. Dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century it is one of the few old riverside houses to survive. Once, buildings like this would have lined both sides of the River Witham.

**12.** **Waterside North**, during normal business hours, provides access to the Waterside centre which has public facilities, cafes and shops.

**13.** **City Square** stands in an area that was occupied by overcrowded 19<sup>th</sup> Century tenements surrounding filthy yards that contained both wells and open sewers. These slums were a breeding ground for disease, and Lincoln suffered a typhoid epidemic in 1904. In the 1930s the Slums of Lincoln were demolished. A row of shops on **Sincil Street** are all that remain of the terraces in the area (see also 15).

**14.** The **Central Market** was built in 1937 but it incorporates the **Georgian frontage** of the old **Butter Market** which was moved from its original location on the High Street north of Silver Street.

**15.** The east side of **Sincil Street** is a rare survival of the **19<sup>th</sup> century terraced houses** with early 20<sup>th</sup> century shop fronts. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century shops like these would have been common in the streets of Lincoln town centre. Recently restored in 2022, wander through the archway between the fish and chip shop, and you will get a lovely view of the east-facing terraces and outbuildings.



**16.** **Lincoln Railway Station**, formerly Lincoln Central Station was built in the Tudor revival style in 1848 by the Great Northern Railway, the first railway built through Lincolnshire.

**17.** The north side of **St Mary's Street** is dominated by several substantial buildings built to provide for the users of the railway, including the elaborate **Barbican Hotel** (built in 1867) and shops.

**18.** **St Mary Le Wigford** is a church of **Saxon origins** with a stone tower believed to have been built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by a Viking named Eirtig. The church was probably built on the driest part of an area that was almost an island surrounded by the Witham and marshes. The church has survived wars and catastrophes in the centuries that followed, even growing in size and importance in the process.



*Billy Smart's circus parade down the High Street in 1955*



**3** Postcard of Lincoln Horse Fair on the Cornhill with the Exchange Arcade in the background c1920. Source: 'Lincoln's Cornhill Quarter: A Surprisingly Rich History' by Beryl Geroge, Lincolnshire Co-Op, p.19

**13** New Market Hotel in 1899 before rebuilding courtesy of Lincs to the Pat ref: LCL3107 (image - front page)

**18** St Mary le Wigford Church by Samuel Hieronymous Grimm (1733-1794) (image - above)

