

# Boston Waterways Walk



A circular walk of 19 km (12 miles)

# Introduction

The waterways, both the river Witham and the man-made drains, have played an important role in the prosperity, and at times decline, of Boston throughout history.

A thriving port during the medieval period, and at times rivalling London in the amount of custom duties collected, the town went into decline when the river silted up preventing ships reaching the port. During the 18th century the construction of the Grand Sluice and the straightening of the river helped reduce the silting and during the 19th century the channel between the docks and The Wash, known as The Haven was straightened.

The drainage of the fens and the construction of sea banks over the centuries have created large areas of fertile land suitable for growing crops and increasing local prosperity.

The extensive waterways network also provides an important wildlife habitat and as you follow this walk you are likely to see a variety of plants and animals, at all times of year.

Some of the waterways are now being developed for recreation and tourism with new angling facilities, moorings, cycle routes and navigable stretches of water.

**This is one in a series of walks in the Boston area. The others are:  
Boston: River and Rail walk  
Boston: Town walk**

We hope you enjoy them.

# The Walk

## The walk

- 1 Leave The Haven and TIC and turn left.
- 2 At the traffic lights and crossroads continue straight ahead along South End.

Turn left along Skirbeck Road.

Look out on the left for the remains of Hussey Tower, a red brick building dating from 1489 and all that remains of Hussey Hall. The Hall belonged to Lord Hussey, a leading nobleman in the county, who was tried and hanged in 1537 for high treason after he failed to suppress the Lincolnshire Rising the previous year.

- 3 Cross the Maud Foster Drain and turn right along Windsor Bank.
- 4 Climb onto the bank next to the sluice and turn left along the road. After approximately 30m bear left off the road to follow the path beside the pond.

Turn right in front of the church along the public footpath. Cross the road and continue along the bank beside The Haven.

The parish church of St Nicholas is thought to predate St Botolph's church in the centre of Boston and is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

The Haven is the section of the River Witham downstream of the Grand Sluice in Boston. In the 18th century it meandered out to The Wash and often silted up preventing shipping using Boston Docks. In 1800 the engineer John Rennie was commissioned to survey the river and recommend improvements. By 1884 The Haven had been straightened and shortened by 4½ miles!

Continue to walk along the bank of The Haven, through Havenside Local Nature Reserve (LNR), past the sewage works and Pilgrim Fathers memorial.

Havenside LNR consists of a variety of habitats including rough grassland, scrub, meadow, ponds and mudflats. Look out for the black and white oystercatcher feeding on the edge of the river, as well as the colourful goldfinch and yellowhammer amongst the scrub and grass.

The memorial was erected in 1957 and marks the place where a group of puritans were arrested attempting to flee to religious freedom in 1609. Some were tried and imprisoned in the Guildhall in Boston, which is now a museum.

Look out for the remains of a number of Second World War pill boxes and gun houses along The Haven banks.

# The Walk

- 5 Walk past the Jolly Sailor and turn left to join a lane. Turn right and then left along a public footpath beside the Hobhole Drain.

This drain was designed by John Rennie and finished in 1812. It carries water from the fenland north of Boston and the pumping station maintains the water level in the drains to ensure the fens do not flood. Many birds and waterfowl use the drain, look out for mallards, moorhens, coots, great crested grebes, herons and kingfishers.

Follow the path alongside the drain and through the nature reserve to a road.

The nature reserve is managed by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and on a warm summer's day the colourful wildflowers such as knapweed, lady's bedstraw, yarrow and agrimony attract a variety of butterflies.

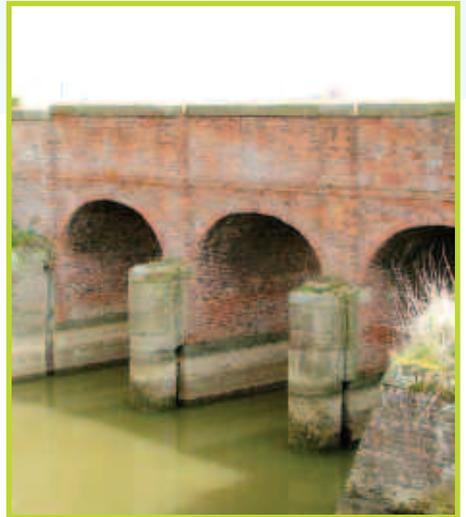
- 6 Cross the road and continue along the public footpath beside the drain.
- 7 At the next road, continue straight on again.
- 8 At the next road junction continue straight on again alongside the drain.

- 9 The next road you come to is the busy A52. **Cross the road with care**, turn left and then right along Bakers Lane.

- 10 After approximately 1000m, and just before a bridge, turn left along the public footpath beside Cowbridge Drain.

At the junction with a road continue straight on beside the drain.

Mastin's bridge spans Cowbridge drain and is one of a series of attractive red brick bridges built in the early 19th century when the drains were constructed.



- 11 The next junction is with the busy A16 road. **Cross the road with care** and continue along the public footpath.

# The Walk

**Cross the railway line with care** and continue straight on for approximately 150m to a junction of paths.

- 12 Take the left hand path.

You will walk past an area of trees, including ash and oak, which were planted by the Boston Ramblers in 1985 to celebrate the 50th year of the Ramblers Association.

This section of the drain had become silted up. In 2006 areas were excavated to create pools where fish can take refuge when water flow is high. The area is also valuable for wildlife including great crested newts.

- 13 Before reaching the road and in front of the house, turn left following the public bridleway.

- 14 At the road continue straight on beside the Maud Foster Drain.  
**Cross the railway line with care.**

Maud Foster windmill was built in 1819 at a cost of £1826. The present owners bought the mill in 1987 and have brought it back into working order and opened it to the public. For opening times call 01205 352188 or visit [www.maudfoster.co.uk](http://www.maudfoster.co.uk).

- 15 Turn right at the junction with Hospital Lane to cross the drain using Hospital Bridge. Turn left along Horncastle Road.

This early cast-iron pedestrian bridge was constructed in Butterley, Derbyshire in 1811. Originally there were 3 identical bridges. One has since been replaced and the other is at Cowbridge. Because of its national importance it is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

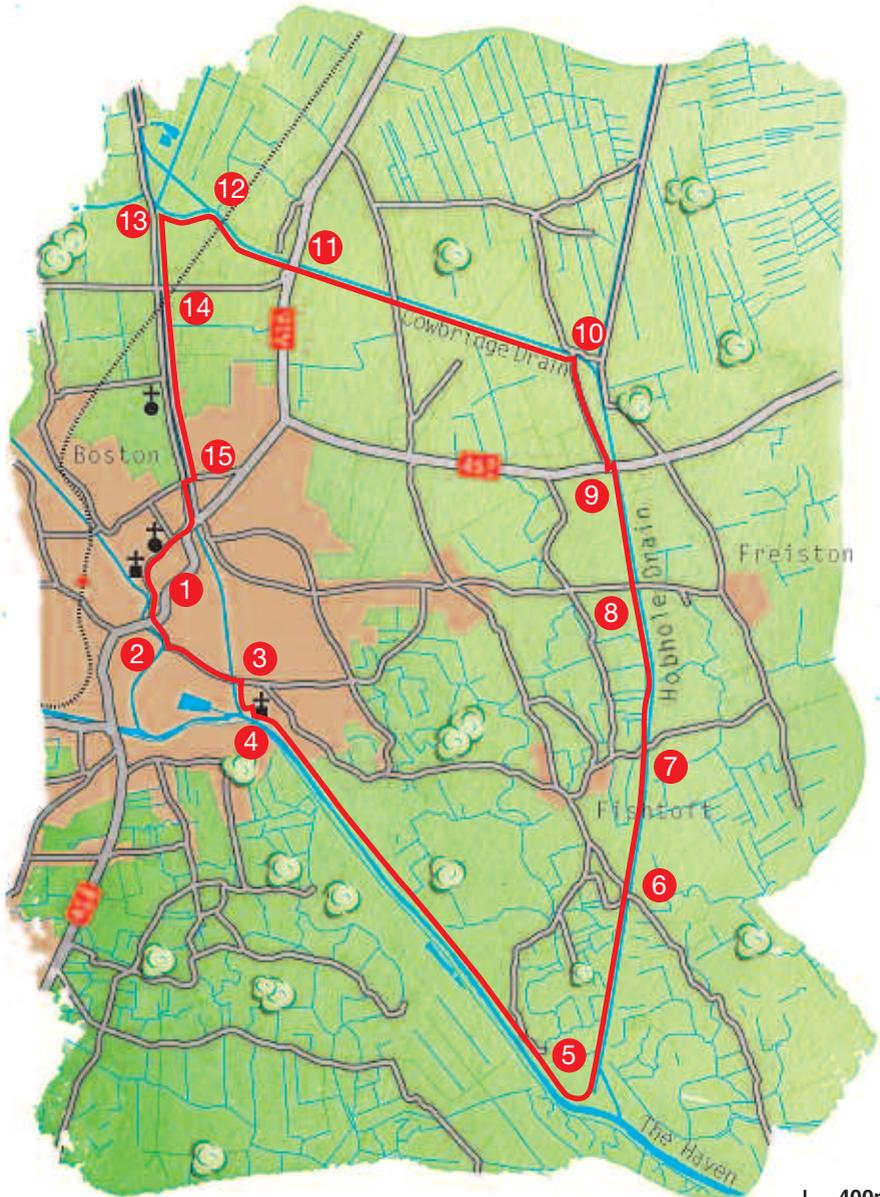
At the junction continue straight on along Wide Bargate and into the town centre and onto Bargate and Market Place.

Continue straight on through the Market Place and onto South Street to return to the starting point.

There are a number of interesting buildings to look out for along South Street including Shodfriars Hall, The Custom House, The Guildhall, Fydell House and the modern Haven. For more information see the Boston Town walk leaflet.



# Map & Walk



Map Scale: | 400m  
| 1/4 mile

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# Walk Information

**Walk location:** Boston is located 56 km (35 miles) south-east of Lincoln.

**Starting point:** Tourist Information Centre and The Haven, South Square, South Street, Boston. Grid reference: TF 328 438. Phone: 01205 356656



**Parking:** Pay & display car parks in Boston.

**Public Transport:** Boston is served by buses and trains. For times and more information call the Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/busrailtravel](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/busrailtravel).

**Walk length:** 19 km (12 miles). At a leisurely pace the walk will take approximately 6 hours to complete.



**Type of walk:** The walk uses drain and river banks, which may be muddy in places. The walk is level.

**Ordnance Survey maps for the area:** Explorer 261 Boston. Landranger 131 Boston & Spalding.

**Refreshments:** There is a good selection of shops, cafes and pubs in Boston. Refreshments are also available at Fishtoft and Cowbridge.

**Public toilets:** Market Place and Bus Station, Boston.

*This walk and leaflet have been produced by the Natural Environment Team with assistance from Divisional Highways Officers based in Boston.*

# Be a responsible walker

Please remember the countryside is a place where people live and work and where wildlife makes its home. To protect the Lincolnshire countryside for other visitors please respect it and on every visit follow the Countryside Code. Thank you.

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

Most of all enjoy your visit to the  
Lincolnshire countryside

This leaflet is one in a series of walk leaflets produced by Lincolnshire County Council's Natural Environment Team to help you explore and enjoy the county's countryside. If you have enjoyed these walks and would like information on other walking routes in Lincolnshire then please visit our website.

If you encounter any problems whilst on these walks, such as an overgrown path or a broken sign post, please let us know so they can be corrected.

We would also welcome your comments and suggestions on the walk and leaflet to help improve future editions.

*If you require this leaflet in another format please contact us.*

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