

The Lincolnshire Wolds

A talk by Helen Gamble, Project Officer

The flat open fields of Lincolnshire with their wide-open skies often punctuated by the Red Arrows, are a far cry from the rugged Pennine Moors landscape that I left behind when I moved here three years ago. The Lincolnshire Wolds however, are a different story. With their rolling hills and steep sided wooded valleys, they offer a landscape much more familiar to my eyes.

“Why are the Wolds so different?” The answer, as Helen Gamble from the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service explained, lies beneath our feet. It is all down to the geology. A chalk ridge runs roughly north to south, its thin covering of vegetation revealing plenty of flint during the recent drought. The landscape was shaped by vast quantities of melting glacial water flowing through the region at the end of the last Ice Age. This left alluvial deposits to the south of Market Rasen and around Louth, with some from as far away as Scotland and Norway.

Today we can see why the Wolds have been awarded AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) status, although in its more recent past with the quarries and the mining industry in full production it must have been hard to see the beauty. Up until the 1300's it was a relatively densely populated area with an open field system and managed rabbit warrens. The latter contributed to Brigg's reputation as the largest producer of coneys (rabbits) in the world.

But economics change and people moved on, leaving behind dozens of deserted medieval villages. A similar pattern was repeated with the arrival of airfields, first to support the war effort and later during the Cold War. When these closed, they too were abandoned leaving behind a distinctive legacy of MOD style buildings.

Today, we are left with peaceful villages of quaint cottages and churches built of golden coloured stone and the occasional busy pub. You can explore the area by foot or by bike just don't get caught up in the professional “Lloyd's Tour of Britain Race” and find yourself peddling furiously to stay in the peloton!

There are plenty of guides and suggestions on the Lincolnshire Wolds website at lincswolds.org.uk

The Wolds are definitely a place full of interest and deserving of AONB status. A geological and historical wonder just on our doorstep – so why not step out and enjoy it?

Rosey Thompson