

A walking tour of uphill Lincoln

On Thursday 15th October a group of 15 led by our guide Penny Fosdyke left, I'm sorry, followed a trail of murder and mayhem around uphill Lincoln.

Starting outside the Lincoln hotel we learnt about the demise in 1822 of local M.P. Coningsby Sibthorpe who was dining locally. On leaving his host his coach lurched, the horses bolted and the coach overturned. It was later discovered that a vital lynchpin was missing from the frame of the coach causing the crash. Eleven months later he died from his injuries. Was it an accident or was it murder? The M.P. being a supporter of George the Fourth and the folk of Lincoln being supporters of Caroline his Queen in their matrimonial disputes.

From there, past a stone head sticking out of a wall in Eastgate, supposedly keeping an eye out for young priests going off to the local hostelrys and other entertainments in the Bailgate area, to Minster Yard where two felons being taken from the prison in 1343 to a place of execution were rescued by young priests in training and given sanctuary in the Cathedral from where one escaped completely.

Through the arch to the Castle where Joan Flower was accused of using witchcraft in 1616 to kill the Duke of Rutland, she died after eating consecrated bread, then a test to identify witches. Her two daughters were subsequently executed as accomplices.

Round to Gordon Road where on the 22nd June 1895 the son of the local baker was savagely attacked by a dog, it was thought to have rabies and had attacked 5 other children. In possibly the first instance of what we would now call "Crowd Funding" money was raised and transport arranged to send the children to Pasteur institute Paris for treatment. It was found that the dog did not have rabies and the children survived.

The next stop was by the Newport arch and the tale of Springheel Jack who was supposed to have first appeared in 1837 in London, apparently smartly dressed as a "gentleman" leaping out and assaulting innocent folk, and

then making extraordinary leaps to escape capture, In Lincoln in 1877 he was seen dressed in a sheep skin and jumped onto the top of the arch to escape.

Before taking place in the Castle the gallows were situated in the area outside the Strugglers Inn, various felons were hanged here including one Tom Otter whose body in 1806 after execution was “gibbeted” i.e. hung in chains and left to rot from a pole at Drinsey Nook the scene of his crime of murdering his pregnant girlfriend.

Happy days! We move to the West Gate of the castle an area of thieves, prostitutes, other hangers-on and artists of various sorts.

Finally at the end of a fascinating and educational walk we arrive at the Palladian front of the Lawns. Originally a lunatic asylum, but with a humane and more enlightenment regime for the patients.

Martin Jackson