

# HERITAGE & CHURCH...

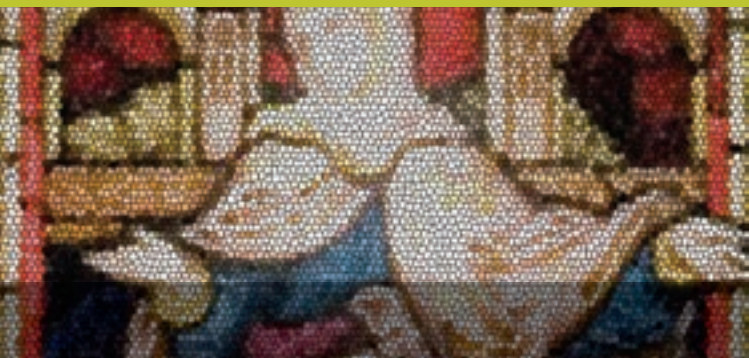
NORTHERN LINCOLNSHIRE

# TRAILS

## Isle of Axholme



[www.churchtrails.com](http://www.churchtrails.com)



# HERITAGE & CHURCH TRAILS

## ISLE OF AXHOLME

### About the Project

Over the past two millennia churches have been at the heart of communities across the country and the churches of Northern Lincolnshire are no exception. Tightly bound to the events that shaped each town or village in the county, churches are able to act almost as living museums.

Go into a church and look around. Before long you will have found something unusual – perhaps a strange mark in stone or brickwork, or an object that stands apart from its surroundings. Take the time to find out a little more about this sight and the chances are that you will have stumbled across a portal back in time. Whether this portal leads back to an epic moment in the area's history or gives a quiet insight into the life of an individual is for you to discover, but every church in Northern Lincolnshire has its own tale to tell.

In recognition of the unique position occupied by churches throughout our history the Northern Lincolnshire Heritage & Church Trails were set up to allow visitors access into these historic treasures, as well as allowing you to enjoy the area's stunning rural landscape.

Sixteen churches were selected from across the area and fitted with new heritage displays, charting the fascinating history of each town or village. Each of the churches taking part in the project opens to visitors on a regular basis.



This project is part financed  
by The European Regional  
Development Fund



These churches are divided into four groups: Barton and the surrounding area, Brigg and the surrounding area, the Isle of Axholme and North East Lincolnshire. A guide to each area is available from each church taking part and from the Tourist Information Centres at Brigg and Cleethorpes. There are also nearby places of interest for you to visit, listed in the back of the leaflet.

Even more information can be found on the website:  
[www.churchtrails.com](http://www.churchtrails.com)



The project gratefully received funding from the Northern Lincolnshire Rural Local Action Group.

The Northern Lincolnshire Rural Local Action Group (LAG) aims to influence and shape rural development across North and North East Lincolnshire. The funding has been made available through the Northern Lincolnshire RDPE LEADER Programme (Rural Development Programme for

England), which is jointly funded by Defra and the European Union, and is managed by Yorkshire Forward in the Yorkshire and Humber Region.



For more information about the LEADER Programme in Northern Lincolnshire, please contact the LEADER Team on 01724 297781 or visit [www.northernlincolnshirelag.org](http://www.northernlincolnshirelag.org)



# HERITAGE & CHURCH TRAILS

## ISLE OF AXHOLME

### Introduction

A visit to the Isle of Axholme is a step into a landscape that has changed radically in the past but still retains a unique identity. The Isle was once not one island but several, each separated by the untamed waters of three rivers set in daunting marshland. This insular landscape was reflected in the people who lived here: proud and self sufficient but swept along by the great currents of history. Here castles were besieged, breathtaking engineering undertaken, riots and sabotage erupted together with the birth of a major branch of the Christian faith – Methodism.

John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism, were born at the Old Rectory, Epworth and from humble origins they set about changing the world. As well as the Old Rectory, St. Andrew's Church in Epworth has strong connections to the Wesley family and the attractive Wesley Memorial Methodist Church serves as a reminder of John and Charles' significant work.



Many of the Isle's churches also have stories to tell about the Wesleys, including St. Pancras Church at Wroot where John was curate and his father Samuel was rector.

A stained glass portrait of John and Charles Wesley at the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Epworth



An appreciation of the Isle of Axholme is not complete without an understanding of the immense changes made to the landscape by a Dutch engineer named Cornelius Vermuyden in the 17th century. In 1626 Charles I engaged

Vermuyden to drain 60,000 acres of wetland from Hatfield Chase in the west to the River Trent in the east. The work involved hand digging of mile after mile of drainage ditches together with the diversion of two rivers: the Idle and the Don. The result, with a few later additions, is the landscape we see today.

This huge reclamation was not without a social cost. Dutch and French workers were employed but were not welcomed by many of the local population who saw their traditional livelihoods threatened. Resistance continued for many years - even Parliament was petitioned - but the work continued and endures to this day. The farmland produced is some of the most fertile and productive in England.

Exploring the Isle of Axholme by bicycle or on foot, taking time to discover every part of this fascinating and unique landscape, is a rewarding experience. Many of the churches in this project are easily accessible by bicycle or form the start or finish point of an enjoyable walk. The wider region of Northern Lincolnshire is ideal cycling country with part of the national cycle network, Sustrans 1, running through the area. For more information about walking, cycling and public transport routes available in the area please see the website.

# HERITAGE & CHURCH TRAILS

## ISLE OF AXHOLME

### St. Oswald's Church, Althorpe



First impressions can be misleading and the approach to St. Oswald's Church at Althorpe does not do justice to this fine building. A brief stroll around the church reveals the beauty of the architecture, particularly from the

grounds to the south. Also revealed on this route is the startling proximity of the River Trent, now tamed with artificial banks.

The church is unusual in that it is largely the result of a single building programme, undertaken in 1483 and funded by the landowner Sir John Neville whose coat of arms is displayed on the west side of the tower. Most other medieval churches incorporate many different stages of enlargement and alteration, reflecting the architectural styles favoured at the time. St. Oswald's is of the perpendicular style prevalent in the 15th century.

Today's church is founded on the site of an earlier one and re-uses some of the salvaged stone. This earlier church was probably founded in the 12th century by Roger de Mowbray who is associated with all the churches on the Isle of Axholme Heritage Trail.

This earlier church had close connections with the Knights Templar who raised funds from their lands in England and abroad to pay for the continuing Crusades in the Holy Land. These knights had land in nearby Keadby and Temple Belwood, not far from Belton.





Other crusading knights have also left their mark on the area. In 1185 the first recorded priest to serve at Althorpe paid his dues to the Knights Hospitalier who founded a hospital in Jerusalem in 1023 to care for sick and injured pilgrims. There are references to a hospital at Temple Belwood although history offers us no direct link. Temple Belwood has since been demolished.

Inside the church there are treasures to be found. The beautiful carved sedilia, with three seats, can be found in the south chancel wall and is likely to have survived from the earlier church. The wooden rood screen between the nave and the chancel, although heavily restored, has original 15th century elements.

A visit to St. Oswald's Church gives the opportunity to see a late medieval church as the builders intended at the time. The Heritage Trail enables us to appreciate the unique character of each church as it has been shaped over the centuries. The hopes and aspirations of communities through the ages are preserved in the fabric of these remarkable buildings.

**St. Oswald's Church, Church Lane, Althorpe DN17 3HX**

Open Wednesdays and Saturdays 10am-2pm. Please phone for access outside these hours

Contact 01427 872207/01724 782264

Disabled access and WC

On street parking

# HERITAGE & CHURCH TRAILS

## ISLE OF AXHOLME

### All Saints' Church, Belton

For many visitors to the Isle of Axholme, All Saints' Church in Belton may be the first stopping point. Barely five minutes by car from the M180, the church is situated on a low hill towards the southern end of the ribbon-like village. Clustered around the road to Epworth, the village resembles a collection of hamlets and the area around the church is known as 'Church Town'.

All Saints' Church is a beautiful stone building set in shaded and tranquil surroundings, predominantly in the medieval perpendicular architectural style. Saxon pottery has been found in the churchyard indicating that there was a settlement and perhaps a church here before the Norman conquest of 1066. The church has a rich history and a few surprises to reward the curious visitor.



The tall painted arcades surmounted by the 14th century clerestory windows, give this church a lofty and spacious atmosphere. Standing in the nave and observing the tower reveals clues that at one time the church

was intended to be even more spacious. A huge perpendicular arch punctures the tower wall, flanked on either side by smaller arches which are now blocked. From outside the tower appears too short in proportion to the nave. These features have led to speculation that works were planned for the church which may have transformed the building into the 'Cathedral of the Isle', but for reasons now lost they were never executed.





In the 12th century the church, like many others on the Isle, was in the extensive lands of the powerful Norman lord, Roger de Mowbray. He fortified the castle at nearby Owston Ferry and was an enthusiastic crusader, travelling to the Holy Land three times in his lifetime. He was a generous supporter of the Knights Templar and gave them land at nearby Temple Belwood. A Maltese cross salvaged from this site can be seen in front of the Belton village school.

To the left of the altar, on the floor of the church, is a stone carved with an effigy of a knight. Unknown in origin and name, it is interesting to speculate who he might have been and what deeds he undertook.

Thomas Vasavour was buried here in 1671. He tried to resist Charles I's scheme to drain the land by legal means and became known as 'The Solicitor'. Many of the events of these turbulent times are featured in an historical novel 'Manuscript in a Red Box' which has an intriguing and mysterious origin. A fitting association for a fascinating and beautiful church.

### **All Saints' Church, Stockhill, Churchtown, Belton DN9 1PE**

Open Wednesday and Saturday 10am-2pm from March to October. Closed November to February.  
Contact 01427 872207

Disabled access and WC  
Parking next to church on Stockhill

# HERITAGE & CHURCH TRAILS



## ISLE OF AXHOLME

### **St. Martin's Church, Owston Ferry**

On arriving at the entrance to the grounds of St. Martin's Church the visitor is greeted by a magnificent gothic triple stone archway through which can be glimpsed the remarkable setting of the church itself. Passing through the arch, the route gently rises between an avenue of trees towards the Lychgate with the church beyond.

It is not immediately apparent that the church has been built in the bailey of a Norman motte and bailey castle. Detour left from the gate, through the trees and after a few yards the earth mound, or motte, reveals itself. From the summit the layout of 'Kinnard's Castle' is apparent all around and there are views over the Isle of Axholme. The timber walls have long gone, deliberately removed after the castle was besieged in 1174, falling to the forces of Henry II.

The castle had been fortified and defended by the powerful Mowbray family who held extensive lands in the area and beyond. Roger de Mowbray is associated with a church on this site as early as 1145 but the earliest standing parts of the church date from 1280.



The church had many additions over the centuries reflecting the architectural styles of the time. The Perpendicular style favoured in the 15th century can be seen in the south aisle windows and in the porch

although this is a rebuild of 1840. Walking around the church to the north another 19th century rebuild is apparent. The north aisle was rebuilt in yellow London brick but the windows were reused from the earlier structure.





These later structures, together with the archway at the entrance, were the work of Reverend W.B. Stonehouse who also published a history of the Isle of Axholme. An impressive monument to him and the Sanders family, also great benefactors of the church, stands proudly in the churchyard.



The interior of the church has much to offer, one of the most intriguing sights being the embroidery of eighteen year old Ann Marie Blackburn. Her depiction of Lincoln Cathedral won a certificate and gold medal at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in the Crystal Palace, London, and was created using her own hair. Today it is displayed to the right of the altar.

St. Martin's Church and setting has much to offer visitors and the village has its own Smithy Museum and Heritage Centre on the High Street.

**St Martin's Church, Church Street,  
Owston Ferry DN91RG**

Open daily May to September 9am-5pm and weekends in winter months

Refreshments served 3 - 4.30pm on Sunday afternoons in June and August

Contact 01427 728511

Disabled access and WC

Parking available on the Church Drive and roadside in Church Street



# HERITAGE & CHURCH TRAILS

## ISLE OF AXHOLME

### St. Pancras' Church, Wroot

A journey to Wroot, on the western fringes of the Isle of Axholme, is in itself an adventure. Following the grid-like maze of narrow roads, often bounded on each side by deep dykes, the visitor can often feel they have perhaps lost their way. In the middle ages the journey would require an intricate local knowledge of the safe routes through the marshland or, in times of flooding, a boat.

On arrival at the village of Wroot, situated on a low hill, the next surprise is to discover the church is not in the village at all but a quarter of a mile to the south. The suffering of the village during the bubonic plague of 1348–50 called for radical measures and, as a precaution against further outbreaks, the whole village was moved and the timber church burnt.

Today the church of St. Pancras stands alone without a hint of the medieval village that once surrounded it. The setting is an excellent vantage point to view the other low hills to the east, crowned by their settlements. It is easy to visualise how the scene would have been before the drainage works of the 17th century with wild marshlands surrounding the small dry island of Wroot.

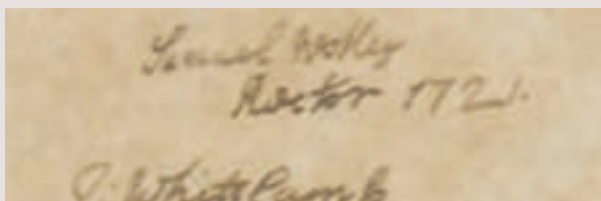
In common with much of the Isle of Axholme, Wroot was owned in the 12th century by the Norman Lord, Roger de Mowbray who also had large estates in Warwickshire and Yorkshire. However, possibly because of the

difficulty of collecting taxes from an unruly island population, he gave all his holdings at Wroot 'to God and the monks of St. Mary's York'. As a result, it is probable that the village was relatively poor and only aspired to a timber church for many years.





The church here today is a late Victorian building but stands on the site of previous stone and timber structures. John Wesley was curate here between 1727 and 1729, as the memorial at the gate records; his father, Samuel Wesley, was rector of Wroot and Epworth.



▲ Samuel Wesley's signature on a list of rectors in the church

Subsequently the village had three chapels, both Primitive and Wesleyan, but today only one Methodist Chapel remains. The church is a site of pilgrimage for Methodists from all over the world who wish to experience the places where John Wesley worked and lived.

### **St. Pancras' Church, Field Lane, Wroot DN9 2BN**

Open Wednesday and Saturday 10am-2pm March to October.  
Closed November to February.  
Contact 01302 770494

On street parking

Disabled drivers may park close to the church door by arrangement only

# PLACES TO VISIT

## ISLE OF AXHOLME



### **Epworth – the Birthplace of World Methodism**

Epworth is famous as the birthplace of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of the Methodist movement. Alongside buildings in the town which played significant roles in the lives of the Wesleys, including The Old Rectory and St. Andrew's Church, the streets of Epworth are rich with history. Take time to follow the Epworth Town Trail and discover the market cross where John preached many sermons to his devout followers, or take in the beautiful sights of Wesley Memorial Methodist Church. A statue of John Wesley was erected on Albion Hill in 2003 to celebrate the tercentenary of his birth and now forms part of the trail.

However, there is more to Epworth and the Isle of Axholme than the Wesley connection. A medieval manor house, belonging to the Mowbray family, once stood beside St. Andrew's Church. §The Mowbrays were a powerful medieval dynasty whose influence spread far and wide across the county but is particularly evident on the Isle. Many of the local churches were founded by Roger de Mowbray and his connections with the Knights Templar shaped the area.



## St. Andrew's Church



This attractive church on the edge of Epworth has architectural features dating back to the 12th century as well as having strong connections to the Wesley family. Samuel Wesley was rector at the church and is buried in the grounds; his son, John, later preached to the townspeople from this tomb. The site of Vinegarth, home to the powerful Mowbray dynasty lies beside the church.

### **St. Andrew's Church, Church Walk, Epworth DN9 1ES**

Contact 01427 872080

[melvynrose@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:melvynrose@tiscali.co.uk)

## The Old Rectory



Childhood home to John and Charles Wesley, the Old Rectory is an elegant Queen Anne building displaying a fascinating collection of paintings and period furniture. Now a museum, the Old Rectory charts the history of World Methodism. Outside the house you can find the Physic Garden where many of the plants John listed in his book, 'Primitive Physic', grow, accompanied by lists of the maladies they were hoped to cure.

### **The Old Rectory, 1 Rectory Street, Epworth DN9 1HX**

Contact 01427 872268

[curator@epwortholdrectory.org.uk](mailto:curator@epwortholdrectory.org.uk)

[www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk](http://www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk)

## Wesley Memorial Methodist Church



Built in 1889 and set in beautiful formal gardens, the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church is an inspiring reminder of the achievements of John and Charles Wesley. A stained glass portrait of the two men can be seen above a depiction of Christ in the chancel window. This Grade II listed church is open daily 10am-4pm and a guided tour is available by request.

### **Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, High Street, Epworth DN9 1EP**

Contact 01427 872319

[David.leese@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:David.leese@tinyworld.co.uk)



# PLACES TO VISIT

## ISLE OF AXHOLME

### **St. Oswald's Church, Crowle**

There has been a settlement at Crowle since Neolithic times and Bronze Age and Roman artefacts have been found in the area. At the time of the Domesday Book in 1086 Crowle was the most populous and valuable holding on the Isle of Axholme with 32 cottages and a manor house. There is also mention of a church, the only one mentioned in the Isle of Axholme, which indicates there was a Saxon Church here before the Norman Invasion of 1066.

The church we see today originates from 1150 and the south and west walls of the nave survive from this period, showing that the original Norman nave was remarkably wide for the period. The south doorway is a beautiful example of Norman architecture with distinctive semi-circular arches, columns and capitals.

The nave was heightened in the 15th century with the addition of the clerestory windows. The chancel, partly rebuilt in 1856, has a beautiful three section stained glass window depicting the Crucifixion, St. John and St. Bartholomew.

The church is dedicated to St. Oswald, in common with nearby Althorpe church. Oswald was King of Northumbria and was converted to Christianity by the monks of Iona. He died in the battle of Maserfield in 642 AD, fighting King Perda of Mercia.

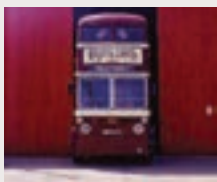
Inside the church there is a remarkable relic of the Saxon period, known as the 'Crowle Stone'. It is a huge carved stone, nearly seven feet long, originally used as a Saxon cross shaft and decorated with Norse carvings. Probably 11th century in origin, the stone was re-used by the Norman masons in the 12th century to serve as a lintel above the west door of the church. It was rescued from this fate in 1919 during building works.

### **St. Oswald's Church, Crowle DN17 4LE**

Open by arrangement  
01724 710973



## The Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft



Home to the largest collection of trolleybuses in the UK, come to the Trolleybus Museum and take a nostalgic ride around the purpose-built track. The 1950s and 1960s have been brought back to life with shop window displays and a pre-fabricated house, complete

with period gadgets and decorations. See website for opening times.

**The Trolleybus Museum,  
Belton Road,  
Sandtoft  
DN8 5SX**

Contact 01724 711391  
[www.sandtoft.org.uk](http://www.sandtoft.org.uk)

## The Old Smithy & Heritage Centre



A relic of a time when the ports of North Lincolnshire were thriving and Owston Ferry offered a vital trade link to Gainsborough and Hull, the Old Smithy remains exactly as it would have been during the Victorian age. There is an exhibition of agricultural tools in

a courtyard setting and the village museum on the first floor. Open Sundays and Bank holidays May to September 2-5pm.

**The Old Smithy & Heritage Centre,  
High Street,  
Owston Ferry  
DN9 1RH**

Contact 01427 728361

# PLACES TO STAY

## ISLE OF AXHOLME



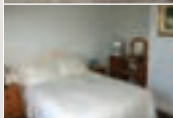
### **CROWLE**

The Stables at Owlett Hall  
**01724 711191**



### **EPWORTH**

Newlands Holiday Cottages  
**07989076736**



### **EPWORTH**

Wesley Guest House  
**01427 874512**



### **EPWORTH**

The Old Granary  
**01427 872968**



### **WROOT**

Brook Cottage  
**01302 772285**



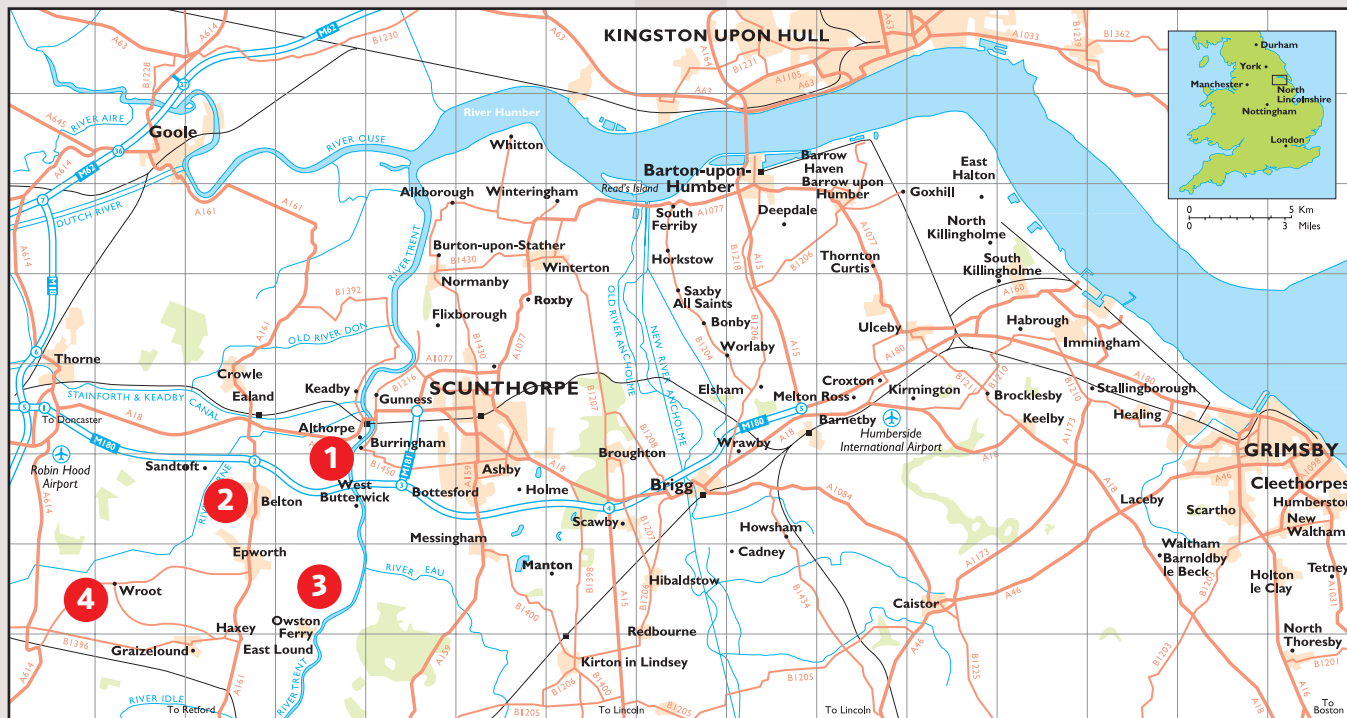
### **WROOT**

The Granary  
**01302 770196**



A selection of accommodation is also available in nearby Scunthorpe, please go to [www.visitnorthlincolnshire.com](http://www.visitnorthlincolnshire.com) or call 01652 657053 for details

# NORTHERN LINCOLNSHIRE MAP



- 1 St. Oswald's Church, Althorpe
- 2 All Saints' Church, Belton
- 3 St. Martin's Church, Owston Ferry
- 4 St. Pancras' Church, Wroot

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For more information on places to visit in North Lincolnshire contact Brigg Tourist Information Centre on 01652 657053 or go to [www.visitnorthlincolnshire.com](http://www.visitnorthlincolnshire.com)

# PLACES TO EAT

## ISLE OF AXHOLME



### **INGLEBY ARMS**

Amcotts, DN17 4AJ

**01724 782385**



### **WHEATSHEAF INN**

152 Westgate Road, Belton DN9 1QA

**01427 871499**



### **TAKE A GANDER**

1 High Street, Burringham DN17 3NA

**01724 782468**



### **EALAND GATE**

Outegate, Ealand DN17 4JE

**01724 711322**



### **THE EPWORTH TAP**

11 Market Place, Epworth DN9 1EU

**01427 873333**



### **THE LEMON TREE TEAROOM AT HOLMES & GARDENS PLANT CENTRE**

Epworth DN9 1JL **01427 872282**



### **DUKE WILLIAM**

27 Church Street, Haxey, DN9 2HY

**01427 752210**



### **WHITE HART HOTEL**

North Street, Owston Ferry DN9 1RT

**01427 728206**



### **REINDEER INN**

Thorne Road, Sandtoft DN8 5SZ

**01724 710774**



### **FERRY BOAT INN**

9 South Street, West Butterwick DN17 3JT

**01724 782 016**



## How to get here



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### GETTING HERE IS EASY...

Northern Lincolnshire is surprisingly easy to get to! Less than an hour's drive from the cities of Leeds, Sheffield, Lincoln and York – and only 45 minutes from the P&O Ferries terminal in Hull.

#### BY ROAD

The M180 runs into the heart of the area, giving direct access to the national motorway network. It is an easy drive to the Isle from Hull (50 min), Lincoln (50 min), Leeds (1 hr), Doncaster (30 min), York and Sheffield (1 hr).

#### BY BUS

Many of the churches are accessible by rural transport. Local and express services run throughout the area. Call Traveline on 08712 002233 for details.

#### BY RAIL

A regular train service runs between Cleethorpes and Doncaster, calling at Grimsby, Scunthorpe, Althorpe and Crowle. This service links to the national rail network and the scenic Barton to Cleethorpes line. Enquiries 08457 484950.



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