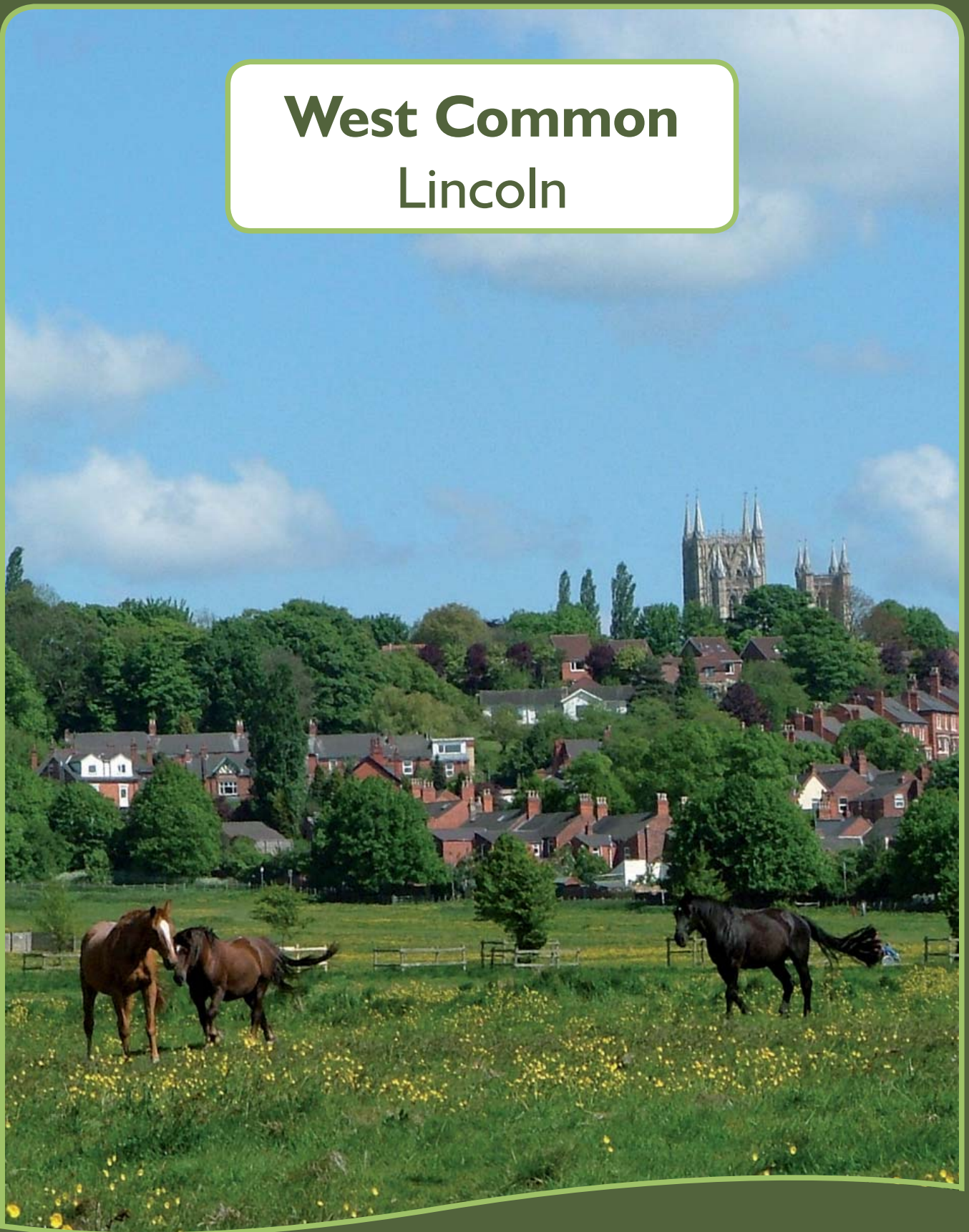


# *Lincoln Commons*

## **West Common** Lincoln



*Discover the history and wildlife of the Common*

# Introduction

**West Common lies on the western edge of Lincoln city centre. It is managed and maintained by the City of Lincoln Council under the provisions of the Lincoln City Council Act 1985 and byelaws made in 1990.**

The Common is situated at the foot of the Lincolnshire Edge, the limestone backbone of the county. It is divided into two by Saxilby Road.

The highest ground of the Common is found at its eastern corner, sloping gently from there to the lower ground alongside the road. From the highest point of the Common there are views to the Trent Valley. The cathedral forms the backdrop when looking across the Common from the lower ground.

West Common has a varied and interesting history and a wealth of wildlife. It is a great place to explore any time of year, but archaeological features are best seen during the autumn and winter when the vegetation is lower.

Lincoln is fortunate to have other areas of Common close to the city centre: Cow Puddle and South Common. Their locations are shown on the map on the back page.



## Where can you walk?

West Common is mapped access land and you have the right to walk anywhere across the area shown on the map.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 gives people the opportunity to

walk freely across mapped access land without keeping to the paths. All mapped access land is shown on Ordnance Survey Explorer maps and at [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)

# Map



## Key

- |   |                                 |       |                      |
|---|---------------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| ① | Roman pottery kiln              | ----- | Access land boundary |
| ② | Racecourse buildings            | —     | Public footpath      |
| ③ | Pavilion (Royal Show) & hangars | ..... | Public bridleway     |
| ④ | Aircraft acceptance park        | Ⓐ     | Access point         |
| ⑤ | WWI trenches                    | Ⓘ     | Information board    |
| ⑥ | Swimming pool                   | Ⓟ     | Parking              |
| ⑦ | Smallpox hospital               |       |                      |

# Please be responsible!



Enjoy the freedom to walk across access land but please follow the Countryside Code.

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them

- Keep dogs under close control and clean up after them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Consider other people
- Please note that the use of metal detectors is not permitted on the Common

Thank you

## History

West Common contains archaeological remains from at least as early as the Roman period, and has both been exploited for building materials and used for agriculture. Much of the lower ground, to the south-west of the old Turnpike Road running to Saxilby, was a source of sand and gravel at various times. It was also useful as grazing land - held in 'common', and local people had 'common rights' to use the land for grazing and farming.



*Ornamental pond for 1907 Royal Show  
(Maurice Hodson collection)*

Later, it became a place for recreation. The city's racecourse was moved to this site in 1773, and was a successful venue for almost two centuries, hosting the Lincoln handicap, the first 'Classic' race

of the flat-racing season. The racecourse was closed in 1964.



*Aircraft Hangar (Maurice Hodson Collection)*

The Lincolnshire Show was held at West Common regularly from 1876, and in the last week of June 1907, the Royal Show was held here. Among the guests was the King, for whom a special pavilion was created, while the pond was decorated for the occasion. The main pavilion lay opposite Alderman's Walk (point ③ on the map). The Common also hosted the Show of 1947.



*The racecourse 1905 (Maurice Hodson Collection)*

The creation of Lincoln Golf Club at the Common took place in the 1890s. It became the Carholme Golf Club in 1906.

It was also used from 1915, during the First World War, as an Aircraft Acceptance Park, at point ④ on the map.

There was a swimming pool adjacent to the Catchwater Drain from 1874 (marked ⑥ on the map), uncomfortably close to a smallpox hospital! (marked ⑦ on the map) which was converted to an isolation hospital following the typhoid epidemic in 1905.

## Archaeology

The site of a Roman pottery kiln, probably one of several here serving the city in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, was found in the 1940s close to the grandstand (① on map). Its products might have been transported by water, either along the nearby River Till, or – if it was in existence by then – the Fosdyke canal, which runs along the south-western edge of the Common and which replaced the river.

Further up the slope, remains of ancient ploughing are visible in the form of ridge-and-furrow; these are certainly several hundred years old, and may have originated together with the medieval suburb to the west of the lower walled city and which dates back to before the Norman conquest.

The straight mile of the famous Lincolnshire Handicap still survives. Apart from the grandstand (1897) and adjacent standing remains, there are other signs of related buildings towards the town end of the common (point ② on the map). These occur as earthworks – humps and bumps in the ground.

Some of the thousands of aeroplanes manufactured in Lincoln, including Sopwith Camels and Handley-Page bombers, were tested here, using three separate runways, one of them a landing circle 250m in diameter in the area now covered by football pitches (point ④ on the map). Traces also exist close to Alderman's Walk of the various hangars required (point ③ on the map).

Behind the grandstand, First World War recruits who gathered here were trained in digging trenches before leaving for France (point ⑤ on the map). In this area, to the south-west of the Saxilby Road, many of the earthworks represent quarrying activities. The subsequent landscaping for the golf course has obscured some of these historic features, but others can still be seen.

Many of the archaeological remains were identified in an earthwork survey undertaken in 2003-4 by English Heritage.



# Wildlife

A variety of habitats can be found on the Common including grassland (acid, neutral and mown) scrub, plantations, individual trees, seasonally flooded shallow depressions, and ponds. With this range of habitats comes a wide variety of animals and plants.

Two locally rare plants can be found in the flooded depressions; water-purslane and small water-pepper. Other interesting plants in the same area include marsh cudweed, strawberry clover and marsh foxtail.



Bats are known to feed on the Common, the ponds in particular being important feeding sites. Both noctule and pipistrelle bats have been identified.

With over 40 horses grazing on the common, the rougher grasses are kept under control, allowing more birds to nest.



*Barn owl (Matthew Harrison)*

Birds of prey and owls are often seen hunting over the Common, including the peregrine falcons that nest at the cathedral.



*Peregrine falcon*

Water voles have been seen in the drainage dykes leading to the Fossdyke Canal.

## Want to find out more?

Why not visit The Collection? The museum has a wealth of artefacts from the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, Roman, Saxon, Viking and Medieval eras. The Collection, Danes Terrace, Lincoln, LN2 1LP. Open daily between 10am and 4pm, for more details call 01522 550990 or visit [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/thecollection](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/thecollection)

Or pick up a copy of the book *Lincoln's West End: A History*, edited by Andrew Walker.

To find out more about local history or other places to visit go to [www.lincoln.gov.uk](http://www.lincoln.gov.uk) or [www.heritageconnectlincoln.com](http://www.heritageconnectlincoln.com)

## Other walks in the area

If you enjoy walking there are plenty of other places close by and across the county to explore. To find a walk to suit you go to [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lincolnshirewalks](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lincolnshirewalks) where you can search a walk database based on location, walk length and walk features.

If you prefer to walk with others why not try a health walk? To find your nearest go to the Walking for Health website at [www.wfh.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.wfh.naturalengland.org.uk)



## Contact details

**For more information about the Commons and byelaws contact:**

City of Lincoln Council  
City Hall  
Lincoln  
LN1 1DN  
01522 881188  
[www.lincoln.gov.uk](http://www.lincoln.gov.uk)

**For more information about the Lincolnshire countryside contact:**

Lincolnshire County Council  
County Offices  
Newland, Lincoln  
LN1 1YL  
01522 782070  
[www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/countryside)

*The Commons are regularly patrolled on motorbikes by the Commons Warden and the Urban Ranger Service. To report a problem or ask a question call the Commons Warden on 01522 873424.*

