

EST 12

Let's awaken more people to the beauty of . . .



Small boats nesting at their moorings in the Haven at Saltfleet. LSG photo (Lo).



The coarse grasses which abound on the dunes along the shoreline. LSG photo (Lo).

MAGNIFICENT MARSHES

COUN Kay Doak, of North Somercotes, wants more people to see and appreciate the beauty of her beloved Marshes — and is intent on promoting them as a tourist attraction.

Here she describes her fascination with the Marshes — that bit of land that stops the Wolds falling into the sea and has nothing to interrupt your view of the sky.

The first thing to remember on the Marsh is, don't hurry. There's a lot to see, but you miss it if you rush. Savour the magnificent yellow of the fields of rape. Don't dismiss that field of rippling wheat and don't be conned into thinking that woolly creature is just another sheep. It is probably a Lincolnshire Longwool peering at you from under his curls.

Remember, lurking in those dykes are herons and one of the most thrilling sights of the Marsh is the slow, purposeful flight of the heron with his eyes on any unsuspecting fish, even if it is the newcomers goldfish!

One of the first villages to attract the visitor is Alvingham with its water mill. This conjures up a scene of a peaceful rural life of the past and if the Marshes are going to offer the visitor anything, it is peace and the hint of a life that has just slipped away.

Alvingham and the Cockeringtons are mid-Marsh. Note the

small farmhouses in mellow red brick with hedges and neat gardens, the cottages dating back to the late Georgian and Victorian period. This part of the Marsh, nestled, protected by the Wolds and is far enough away from the coast to miss the worst of the gales that can lash it in the winter.

Magnificent skies

But beyond South Cockerington, the Marsh changes. This is the land of wide open spaces, of magnificent skies and space to breathe.

It is worth stopping to take in the great sweep of the sky with the spire of South Somercotes church in the distance. This is the only Marsh church to have a spire and in its context it quietly rivals St James in Louth.

Most of the Marsh churches underwent renovation in Victorian times, some were even rebuilt when the older church became unsafe, but they are all worthy of a visit, especially at flower festival time.

It is said that most churches stand on or near their original sites and that all Marsh churches were visible from one another to signal warnings of the Viking raids. It is not difficult to imagine a Viking raid when an autumn mist swirls silently across the land

Near to the coast, the older houses have low sweeping roofs that lean into the wind and many Marsh houses have the fascinating tumble gables that make them so attractive and mark them as Lincolnshire houses. They are evidence of the Dutch influence that came across the North Sea with the traders and perhaps, the smugglers.

Kent and Sussex boast a smuggling past but it takes no imagination at all when standing on the dunes beyond North Somercotes or near the Haven at Saltfleet to picture the small boats creeping in on the tide while the excisemen, if there were any, sheltered in the New Inn.

Of all the coastal villages, Saltfleet has the most to offer architecturally. The Manor House, the New Inn, the Methodist Chapel, Sea Bank Farm and the many cottages bear witness to the tastes of an earlier age and are fine examples of Lincolnshire buildings.

On the outskirts of the villages you will find tiny farms with their yards still intact showing how the Marsh farmers made their living. Saltfleet still has the shell of a windmill and even with the new bungalows slotted in beside the older houses, the

Wildlife paradise

For anyone interested in wildlife the Marsh is a paradise. Besides the herons already mentioned, owls and kestrels flourish, sea birds, waders and migratory birds rest and feed on and near the shores and the hedgerows, fields and dykes abound with voles, shrews, weasels, rabbits, hares, foxes and in the summer months the air is alive with butterflies.

Hasten slowly on the Marsh and you will see all of these. The Marsh has a lot to offer the holidaymaker who wants to fish, cycle, walk, paint and take photographs but if you prefer the comfort of your car don't just think of it as a rural area with the few old buildings. There are pubs and restaurants where you can eat well and in some cases sample local food. Lincolnshire has a gourmet tradition all of its own.

There are caravan parks for family holidays, gift and craft shops, tea shops and local craftsmen working in the villages.

Now, by rights there should follow a list of places to go to and things to do, but that would spoil the fun of exploration. So why not buy a map or get some tourist information from the council offices and discover the Marshes for yourself? If you have eyes to see, you won't be disappointed.



The water mill at Alvingham — a reminder of a day gone by. LSG photo (Lo).



The New Inn at Saltfleet. LSG photo (Lo).