

## HERITAGE WALK THROUGH SINCIL BANK, LINCOLN

**“From a medieval ribbon street and a long ditch to a dense Victorian city landscape”.**

### **Introduction:**

This is a walk through part of Lincoln's urban history. The Sincil Bank district lies either side of an early medieval drainage ditch and stretches eastwards from Lincoln's Lower High Street (formerly Wigford), a medieval suburb which has a history of human occupation that goes back at least to the Roman occupation of Lincoln. For most of its life it has been a semi-rural district, the long ribbon of houses and workshops that ran each side of High Street being almost the only habitations, with long crofts and closes stretching back to the river on the west and to the Sincil Drain on the east. These were used for market gardening, animal husbandry or various medieval crafts. Across the drain, further closes were laid out, utilised mostly as pasture or water meadow for winter fodder, and further to the south-east lay the South or Canwick Common.

From the late 1850's the area to the east of Lower High Street was developed to provide housing for the workforce in the factories that were set up in Lincoln after the arrival of the railways. Most of the dense mass of housing in the grid-like street layout was built in the last 40 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The district now referred to as Sincil Bank comprises the area between the High Street to the West, Canwick Road to the east, Tentercroft Street to the north and South Park/South Park Avenue to the south and south-east.

### **The Walk:**

The numbers below refer to the numbers on the accompanying map. The walk begins from the Tentercroft Street car park, (**number 1** on the map) grid reference SK 97629 70746, ('What3Words' ref. [expand.vocal.visit](https://www.what3words.com/)).

The part of the walk from nos. 1 to 4 should take c. 40 – 45 minutes.

As you walk round the district, look out for the 28 painted telecoms cabinets, the result of an art project in 2018, part of the attempts to regenerate the area, and which were sponsored by LEAP (Lincoln Employment Accommodation Project) a local charity. Local people were involved along with an artist to suggest ideas and to help paint the cabinets to form a community art trail. Try the Q codes on the cabinets.

Take the southern exit from the car park, crossing Tentercoft Street (now part of the new East/West Link Road) at the pedestrian crossing. The street took its name from the medieval woollen cloth industry that was the basis of Lincoln's wealth – newly woven cloth, once washed and dyed, was stretched out in the “tenting grounds,” (crofts stretching back from the High Street) on wooden frames to dry.

Across the road, on your right is the Sincil Dyke, from which the area takes its name. Now constrained in concrete banks, it was originally probably a natural stream cut by overflowing water from the river to the west. Lincoln's Lower High Street lies on a natural raised shingle and sand bank that runs due south and three streams once crossed it, the Sincil itself, the Little Gowt and the Great Gowt. Deepened and perhaps widened to provide both drainage and defence for the lower city during the late Saxon period, the Sincil Dyke may take its name from the Old English for a very long furrow or channel and used to discharge straight into the Witham. It continues to your left, and at the end of the car park disappears into a tunnel that carries on under railway lines and roads and now emerges as a channel (the South Delph) running parallel to the River Witham and discharging into the river 9 miles downstream. This drainage engineering was carried out in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the improvement in drainage of what was a marshy area allowed the development of housing in the district. It was also, until 1881, the only sewer in the area and stank dreadfully in summer as the dense housing filled the area.

**2):** Follow the Drain, keeping it on your right, and walk south until you reach Portland Street. This was laid out in 1871, including the bridge, only the second “modern” road bridge to cross the dyke. The proposer of the road and bridge was the Reverend Francis Swan, who had bought up practically all the land to the east of the dyke stretching to Canwick Road and some to the west in 1852 and whose master plan for the grid of the eastern development can be followed today. The development of the western section, High Street to the Sincil Dyke, was more piecemeal and has a less ordered, planned appearance on the map. The housing of the whole area was built up gradually over around 50 or so years from c. 1860 onwards.

Down Portland Street towards the High Street on the southern side, note the terrace of large and elegant three storey houses built in 1876 for middle class householders with servants. The most easterly section has been demolished and the houses with their high ceilings, basements and elegant mouldings are now converted into multi-occupancy flats, with a distinctly run-down appearance when this tour was first published in September 2020.

Also on that side of the street, closer to the Sincil Drain, is a turning to Hermit Street. This is named after the 1867 Derby winner that made Henry Chaplin, its owner, a small fortune – and gave him the satisfaction of revenge over another race horse owner, whose ambition was to win the Derby that year and who bet and lost a large fortune on the outcome, the feckless, dissolute Henry Plantagenet, Marquis of Hastings. The Marquis had run off with Chaplin's intended bride (Florence Paget, the 'pocket Venus') only days before the marriage was to take place. Chaplin had a stables and paddock here. It was not the stable where Hermit trained, which was at Newmarket, but probably Chaplin's stabling for the horses and carriages he used when he attended Lincoln races with his many guests. He had a fine house, the Burghersh Chantry, in upper Lincoln, in addition to his large residence at Blankney Hall. A road off High Street, just round the corner from Portland Street is named after him.

Stand on the bridge on the south side of the street with your back to the cathedral and look down the drain. Now you have to use your imagination, to see a stream lined with rushes and reeds, with small enclosures of green pasture on the left bank, with animals grazing and trees and bushes dotting the closes. Imagine that to your right, set back a little from the bank, is a high stone wall, perhaps with towers at intervals, that runs right down the stream and continues behind you to a large tower on the bank of the River Witham. This is the Lower City wall, a small stretch of which was excavated and recorded here in the mid-19th century. It's construction, taking account of the marshy nature of the ground, is similar to a still existing city wall in King's Lynn. A section of the wall survived at least until 1610 further down towards the Bargates, of which more later. Behind it lay more closes and crofts that ran back to the wall from the High Street.

Now walk eastwards along Portland Street and on the southern side you will eventually come to a grand building that now houses Webb's Motorcycles. This is the former United Methodist Free Church Chapel, built 1903 and one of the few surviving religious buildings of this date in the area. Further along, near where the modern flyover can be seen, was St Andrew's Church, another very fine building but of Lincolnshire limestone, rather than brick. The architect was James Fowler of Louth and the chancel was decorated by George Frederick Bodley in fine Gothic Revival style. The Reverend Francis Swan provided some of the money for the building, which was finished in 1877. It incorporated some early medieval capitals and arches from a demolished City church, St, Martin's. Sadly, St. Andrew's itself was demolished in 1970 and the site is now a car park for the Bridge Church that occupies the former St. Andrew's School, designed by the noted Lincoln architect, William Watkins.

Retrace your steps to Sincil Bank, the road that lies alongside the Sincil Dyke; the name appears to have derived from works undertaken during widening in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, appearing first on a map of 1817 as Sinsil Dyke Banks, and began as a footpath. On the southern corner of Portland Street/Sincil Bank was a smithy and carriage works, extending round into Portland Street. The buildings here reflect their origins, looking different to the rest of the terraced housing. On the opposite, northern, side of Sincil Bank was a warehouse and stabling for a transport business, established in 1873. The modern flats replaced the older buildings in 2007.

Walk south to see the stone-faced housing that runs along part of Sincil Bank and round into Chelmsford Street. These are the only examples left of any stone buildings on this side of the Drain, and were built c. 1873. Notice the odd appearance of the corner; there was a corner shop here, with an entrance door on the angle. That existed until the 1960's. This is a reminder that there were many small shops in the Sincil Bank area, often on corners. Few survive – but their relics can be seen in the former shop door ways that were positioned at the angle of the street corner. Round into Chelmsford Street is a large arched entry that formerly lead to a yard with stabling or workshops – again, this is a common feature of the streets, so look out for them on your walk; they are a reminder that the entire area once had many small businesses carrying on a variety of trades, many of which required some stabling at the rear. There were also several cowkeepers in the district, taking their animals to graze on the common and bringing them back to sheds in the yards, through large entrances like this one, selling the milk locally. Cowkeepers were still recorded here in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Further along Sincil Bank from the stone-faced housing, the brick terraces include some of the oldest properties on the eastern side of the dyke. Small, low front doors indicate their age although accurate data on their age is difficult to come by. Either side of the opening to Ripon Street the houses are recorded as having been built either in the late 1850's or early 1860's. The first ones appear on a map of the city made in 1868 and may be nos. 39 – 44 (formerly Hallam's Cottages) on the northern side of the Ripon Street opening.

Turn left here and walk down Ripon Street; it was laid out in 1864 and links Monson Street on the other side of the dyke to Canwick Road and the bridge behind you was the site of the first 'modern' road bridge to be built across the dyke. However, housing development was slow along the street and it was 1883 before it was completely built up. A large and rather grand frontage running from nos. 37 to 41 was a former Lincolnshire Co-Operative Society branch built in 1900.

**3:** At the end of the street, across the busy Canwick Road, laid out in 1843, is the imposing entrance to the former Globe Ironworks of Robey and Co., a large engineering firm that was one of the biggest employers in the area, although there were also several other factories along the opposite side of Canwick Road to the north. Robeys moved to the site in 1854, and specialised in steam engineering. By 1892 it employed 1,200 people, most of whom lived in the streets behind you. The factory closed in 1988.

For the benefit of the workers, Robert Robey built a ‘Coffee Palace’ on the northern corner of Ripon street (number 95, now called Globe House)– the building is still there. A supporter of the temperance movement, he hoped that it would encourage his workers to lead abstemious lives. It had stiff competition – a beer house, later the ‘Traveller’s Rest’ pub, already existed to the south of the Ripon Street entrance and may date from as early as 1849, and further south, on the same side as Robey’s works, was the large Chaplin Arms, part brewery, part public house, built as early as 1843. There were several pubs and beer shops throughout the Sincil bank area, and many more on the western side of the High Street. The Coffee Palace struggled and eventually became a strip joint and night club. It is now flats.

Walk north along Canwick Road if you can stand the noise and fumes and look for no. 85, a jewel of a house, a Grade 2 Listed building but filthy from the grime and pollution of the road. Built in 1889, this was the showroom of Joseph Fambrini, born in Florence in Italy, who, in partnership with J. Daniels, established a business making ‘artificial stone’ and terracotta mouldings and ornamental architectural detailing. Their concrete and terracotta mouldings can be found on many local buildings, including the better housing in Sincil Bank, and also on several grand buildings in Lincoln and elsewhere in the country – including some of the finest theatres in the North. The exterior has fine examples of the work of the company.

Retrace your steps to Sincil Bank. The route continues along the Dyke to your right, but if you wish, you can also explore the grid of streets that lie between Canwick Road and the Sincil Dyke. Sometimes referred to as ‘the Maze’, the grid layout seems to be at least partially a planned layout supervised by the Reverend Francis Swan as he parcelled up the land he had bought and sold it off to speculative builders, laying out roads for the houses to go on. The roads may partly follow the lines of the medieval Bargate Closes. The houses fall into distinct types – terraces with doors or shared entrances opening directly onto the street, primarily intended as rented properties, and better quality housing with front gardens, bay windows and mouldings intended at least in part for buyers holding mortgages through local building societies, including the Lincolnshire Co-Op. The societies and the Co Op also built properties

themselves. Built in blocks of 2 up to 27 at a time, often sharing a style down the whole street, they include shops, entries to stables and businesses, and very occasionally larger single houses for the better paid, the local priest or the professional classes.

As you walk down Sincil Bank, note that the road widens and the quality of the houses improves, with small front gardens and bay windows, mouldings and ornamental brickwork. The housing was gradually built up southwards from the 1860's, the last houses before the Football stadium being built in 1912. A stone retaining wall was built along the dyke in 1912 to prevent flooding – recently it has been overtopped several times. On your right, across the dyke between Monson Street and Scorer Street lay the Skinyard, where at least as early as 1851 and probably well before a fellmonger plied his trade. Here hides from the slaughterhouses were steeped in caustic solution and water to loosen the hair and remaining flesh before being sold to the tanneries. The effluent was left to run in the drain and contributed to the vile state of the dyke in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is not clear when the the Skinyard closed. Housing was built in the area after 1895 and the yard itself appears built over by 1912.

### **The Watergang and the South Common**

**4):** Scorer Street bridge was the last to be built across the dyke in 1907, but a little further along there is a footbridge on the site of a medieval plank crossing carrying the ancient Watergang footpath that lead eventually to Canwick. In 1819 a pleasant shady, tree-lined walk was laid out along Sincil Bank from this point, leading to further promenades across the South Common. According to a guide book of 1851, willows, white poplars and mountain ash lined the path, and across the dyke were fine gardens. Some idea of what the Sincil Drain used to look like can be got by standing on one of the footbridges that cross the dyke from this point and looking south along the drain; the banks in summer are full of wildflowers, small bushes and reeds, overlooked by tall trees on the opposite bank, which provide a roost for starlings. Unfortunately the banks are periodically heavily trimmed.

Just before the footbridge the Great Gowt joins the Sincil Dyke. Here in Saxon times and probably well before, there was a wide pool, the Nikor or Nikar Pool, said to be the haunt of a water creature or spirit. Such creatures are common in the folklore of the Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire marshes – they are not to be messed with so be warned.

On the right of the path, just before the football stadium, are what appear to be two large steel drums filled with concrete. These are the last remains of a railway bridge over the dyke and the road that carried the High Level or

Avoiding Line, an embankment carrying rail traffic built in 1882 to take pressure off the two railway crossings that cluttered up Lincoln's High Street (a result of the ill-planned junction in Lincoln of several railway companies). The former earth and stone bank has been largely removed (remains of it can be found in the Cowpaddle across Canwick Road) and reclaimed for housing or the football ground's car park. Closed controversially (the single railway crossing still holds up the High Street frequently) and removed in 1988, its construction at the time split Sincil Bank in two and limited further development south of the embankment.

The football ground dates back to 1895 when Lincoln City football club moved from its original ground across the dyke at the back of the Guildhall after it was sold for housing (see below).

You can now shorten the walk by continuing due south along the dyke to Little Bargate (see below, **number 6**) or carry on along the old Watergang to the South Common. This part of the walk will take another c. 35 minutes. The shortened walk, from Little Bargate and down the High Street should take around 30 minutes.

Sausthorpe Street, to your left before the Football Ground, is roughly on the line of the old medieval footpath. Laid out in 1900, no houses were built until 1911. It is named after the home village and hall of the Swans, father and son, who developed much of the eastern side of Sincil Bank. Walk down to the end and turn right, then take a narrow footpath to the left (signposted 'Children's Centre') that leads to St. Andrew's Close, built on the line of the old embankment. To your right is the newly laid out St Andrew's Garden, a pocket park on the site of a former children's playpark. Walk along the close, past Bishop King Primary School, and take the footpath to your right, with allotments to your left. This leads to South Park Avenue, a very busy road. Cross by the pedestrian crossing and walk straight on (unless you want to explore the Cowpaddle with its relics of former railway lines, in which case walk along the grass to your left and through a tunnel). If you carry straight on, you are on the line of the old Watergang, along what is now a raised footway over an abandoned railway line built 1867 (now usually flooded) and through a passage onto South Park and the South Common. To your left and right are some large houses built along the northern side of the road. These are some of the finest in the area although many have fallen on hard times and have been converted into care homes or flats.

**5):** South Park was laid out in 1867, running from Bargate to Canwick Road, replacing a medieval road that lay slightly to the south. Houses began to appear along the northern side from around 1870. Number 76 was built for George

Wilkinson, an engineer and managing director of Clayton and Shuttleworth, the well-known large Lincoln engineering company, sometime after 1870. The pillars and detailing on the house are of cast iron. Next door, number 77, was built for Robert Robey in 1871, founder of Robey's Globe engineering works. Sadly he didn't live to enjoy it long, dying in 1876 at the early age of 50 in his Nottingham residence. He is buried in the Canwick cemetery, just across the main road at the end of South Park. Both houses had splendid gardens and carriage houses.

If you want to explore the South Common – and it is worth exploring – there is a guide and map on a notice board by one of the gates. It provided grazing for animals kept by local people (and still does) as well as recreation facilities. The first Lincolnshire (Royal) agricultural show was held in the Cowpaddle in 1854. After the Great Northern Railway built a line right across it, opening in 1869, the show was moved to another site.

Walk down the road to the west, keeping the houses on your right, and take the old railway bridge that leads to a path along South Park or walk across the common taking one of the gates off the road, and exit over the old railway line by a footpath that leads to a play area further along. If you take the railway bridge you will see how South Park has been divided in two, an extension called South Park Avenue (constructed in 1961), beginning just south of the railway bridge, now runs to the junction with Canwick Road.

**6):** Cross South Park by the pedestrian crossing and straight ahead is Little Bargate. A bridge leads over the Sincil Drain here, the cobbled path taking you up to the streets alongside the High Street. The former gate and passage are probably on the line of the old Roman road, called Ermine Street, that split from the Fosse Way around the present Sibthorp Street off the Lower High Street and carried on to London. This was the site of one of the two gates that controlled entry into the medieval city. The stonework to the left and under the bridge may include remains of what was an impressive gatehouse, with two large stone towers either side of the gate. Peter de Wint painted a picture of the ruins of the gate before it was taken down in 1826 or 1827 and it may be seen in the Usher Gallery (well worth a visit). It shows the very rural appearance of this part of Lincoln at that time. Excavations in 1856 revealed very substantial foundations. Also in Usher Gallery by the way is a very fine and rare engraving of a view of Lincoln from the top of the South Common made in 1727 by Samuel Buck, and shows a distant view of Sincil Bank and the High Street.

Speed's Map of 1610 shows the gate and a long section of medieval wall still in existence then stretching both to left and right of the gate, along the inner bank of the dyke. The medieval roadway that lead to Little Bargate is preserved in



Featherby Place, off High Street (the line of Ermine Street having been built over and fallen out of use inside the city). Now walk further down South Park to the roundabout and turn right into the High Street.

**7):** On your left at the end of the High Street is the Old Police House, a building of c 1868 - 1877 that was an out-station of the City Police Force; It incorporates cells whose windows can clearly be seen. Formerly there was a tollgate here and a house where the gate keeper lived. Across the road on your left the Sincil Drain continues to join the River Witham and ducks and swans can be seen swimming along between the grassy banks.

Now carry on down the High Street; you are about to cross what was once a defended bridge (like Little Bargate) with a substantial towered gate called Great Bargate (a sketch made by Samuel Buck in 1727 shows the remains of it – it was removed in 1756) and medieval documents suggest a towered wall here, so the original appearance may well have been like Little Bargate, a sizeable impressive gatehouse. In 1217 in the Barons' War a large French and rebel baronial army who had occupied the city and were besieging the castle, held by a royal garrison, were attacked by the royal army under the command of one of the finest of medieval soldiers, William Marshal. The royal army broke into the city at the northern end and put the rebels and French to flight. Rapidly retreating down the hill (or running away like fury – put it anyway you like) they were stopped at the Bargate reputedly by a cart blocking the entrance. The royal force slashed its way through the enemy, destroying their army and killing its commander. The rich city was regarded as sympathetic to the French and rebels, having let them in in the first place, and was subjected to a thorough looting, the hapless male citizens cut down, the women raped. Many tried to flee on overloaded boats on the river and the Brayford but several capsized and their occupants were drowned. The whole event is referred to in histories of the period as 'Lincoln Fair'. Now the only excitement we have on the High Street here is the occasional traffic jam.

You are now standing on what was originally a Roman military road leading to a fort on the top of the hill, which later became the site of a colonia, a settlement for ex-soldiers, and which expanded to become a city. In the middle ages, part of the High Street, from High Bridge to the Gowt was lined with some fine medieval mansions, and housed local notables and visiting nobility and royalty. Foreign merchants lived here and there were no less than 12 churches running along the line of High Street from the Stonebow to Great Bargate. Only four now remain, of which two are in the Sincil Bank area.

On the right, in the angle formed by the Sincil Dyke as it turns to join the Witham after Little Bargate, was the medieval Tilehouse, where clay from the

common was dug and fired for tiles to roof the city houses – wood or thatch were forbidden because of the danger of fire. Also here was the widest part of the medieval marketplace called St Botolph's Green or Wood Green. This stretched beyond the gate as Swine Green, but the section within the walls formed a long narrow triangle of green on the eastern side of the High Street, the apex at the ford (now bridge) over the Great Gowt, the base formed by a short distance between the High Street and the back of the Congregational Chapel of 1867 to your right. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century chains and posts delineated the green, but when these were removed the place became a combined rubbish dump and parking lot for tinker's carts. After 1850 or so housing was built on the old green.

**8):** Carry on down High Street – a short distance down and to your right you will find St Botolph's Church, once one of the largest in Lincoln. Heavily damaged in the English Civil War during the storming of the city in 1643 by the Parliamentary troops, the church was demolished and rebuilt in 1721 using the original stones (you can see where two pillars have been reused in the tower as edging to an inset panel). A Victorian 'restoration' in 1878 involved considerable additions to the church which has a fine interior. It is now a Greek Orthodox church dedicated to Saints Basil and Paisios. To the left of the church is Featherby Place, on the line of a medieval route that lead to Little Bargate and then over the dyke to the roads leading south to London.

As you walk north from former St Botolph's look out for two modern buildings either side of the road bearing the nameplate "Meridian" (nos 415 – 417 on the eastern side which also has the date 1997 on the pediment). These are built on the site of the former railway embankment and bridge where the High Level line crossed the High Street.

**9):** Just north of the Meridian buildings is Gowt's Bridge, first built in 1817 replacing two former stone footbridges either side of a ford over the Great Gowt (or Gowte – it comes from the same derivation as 'gutter' and means a stream). Subsequently the Gowt itself has been widened and deepened and formerly channelled a drain from the fields across the Witham that actually went under the river. Since this was blocked, what was once a pleasant tree lined stream has become a squalid, rubble and rubbish strewn trench. The parapet and balustrades of the existing c.1950 bridge are the originals from 1817. There is, or rather was, a Little Gowte, a few yards to the south also crossed by a ford. It was culverted when the High Level railway embankment was built across the High Street.

On your right just before the bridge is Sewell's Walk; now a street, it was first laid out as a tree-lined promenade (or public park) in 1819 and named later after

Alderman Sewell who improved it by the provision of fences and seats in 1830. The well-regarded walk itself was sold off for houses in 1871. On the line of this road was the first part of the medieval Watergang that crossed the Sincil Dyke by a plank footbridge and then went across the Bargate Closes and South Common to Canwick.

The view to the north from the old walk was of Pennell's nursery, famous for roses and fruit; plants and produce were sold from the shops on the corner. The road was laid out and built up in 1907.

Between Pennell Street and Scorer Street (the last road and bridge to be put across Sincil Dyke) you will see on your right St Peter at Gowts Primary School. Infants were first educated here in 1838. The school is on a confined site, and is currently full. Pleas for an extension and a second floor have apparently been turned down over the years because the ground is thought to be too soft to take the weight i.e. former marshland (information from Chris Williams). This is nothing new – consistently in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the school on this site was reported as overcrowded with education suffering as a result. The site is also probably on part of the old church and graveyard of St. Michael's, in Wigford, demolished in 1535, the stone used for paving and 'dyking and edging the south commons'. Human remains have been found in the area. A block of dressed stone, possibly from the church, was found recently in a garden in South Park.

Cross Scorer Street and next along the east side of the street here is Ashton's Court. This on the site of some of the most notoriously bad areas of cramped, insanitary housing in 19<sup>th</sup> century Lincoln, for which St Peter's at Gowt's parish was infamous. Some of the older housing may have been 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century, with much early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century infill. The fellmonger who operated the skinyard on the dyke (see above) lived here. The present Court was built by the council in 1937, a good example of the improvements made following the slum clearances.

**10):** The splendid church of St Peter at Gowt's is next on the right; the church incorporates some of the oldest stonework in the area - note the late Saxon 'long and short work' (the alternating long vertical and shorter horizontal stones at the corners of the tower and marking the sides of the original narrow, tall nave). The tower has typically Saxon-style double windows. The church was extended in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and again in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Victorian 'restoration' managed to butcher much of the fine medieval building and the church now has a very Victorian feel to the exterior and interior. It is still a very attractive church inside. Formerly several cottages ran along the High Street between the church and St. Mary's Guildhall; all were demolished when

Sibthorp Street was laid out in 1895 and the new vicarage built to the left of the church. The notice board outside the church records the previous appearance of the frontages.

Outside the church, on the high street is a drinking fountain (no longer functional) built 1864 to provide fresh clean water to passers-by. The piped water supply for housing, such as it was, was poor and contaminated and during the typhoid epidemic of 1904-5 (caused by the poor state of Lincoln's water supplies) the conduits were trusted more than the piped water. Improvements were made later and clean water was finally piped to Lincoln from Nottinghamshire in 1911.

**11):** Cross Sibthorp Street. The large medieval building on the right is St. Mary's Guildhall, formerly and incorrectly called John of Gaunt's Stables. On the opposite side of the road was a very fine medieval town house reputedly owned by John of Gaunt but in fact the town house of the de Sutton family and later of the Disneys. It was demolished in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century although parts remained until the 1960's.

St Mary's Guildhall is a rare survival of the houses of the elite and the rich merchants that lined the high street here. It was actually a royal palace built c.1150, much altered since but still incorporating much very fine carved stonework. It has been a brewery and builder's yard in its day and the original Lincoln City football club was first based here on a big open field at the back (John of Gaunt's Field, naturally) that ran down to the Sincil Dyke, and that was leased to the club by Dawber the brewer. Inside under a big glass panel is a section of the Roman road called the Fosse Way in medieval times, running down to the south west of England. It divided slightly to the south of the Guildhall, around Gowt's Bridge, with Ermine Street running off to the east and up the South Common.

Next to the Guildhall are the former residences of the Superintendent and the Deputy Chief Constable of the county police force (both now shops). Monson Street is the next street to your right and on the corner with the high street a large police station was built in 1860, the headquarters of the newly established County Constabulary. It had a drillyard, carriage shed (the entrance can still be seen on Monson Street), cells and a residence also for a sergeant. Monson street had three pubs and some of the poorest housing in the area so the presence of a police station is probably not surprising.

**12):** Monson Street was the first street to be laid out to the east, off the medieval High Street, by Lemuel Pepperdine, local land speculator, in 1846. The north side was fully built up by 1851, the south by 1868. At the back of the

houses fronting the street were some of the notorious ‘courts’, ‘rows’, ‘passages’ or ‘yards’. Here cheap gimcrack houses were crammed into any available space, with inadequate water or sewage facilities. They formed a type of poor quality housing sadly typical of Lincoln in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and lasting until slum clearances in the 1930’s and 1960’s). The whole Sincil Bank area once contained several examples at the back of the terraces and Lower High Street contained some of the worst in the stretch below the Gowt to Great Bargate. It is still possible (but hard) to identify where some of these were.

As a result of the clearances of poor housing in Monson Street, little is left of the original buildings, but the considerable rebuilding here in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has revealed extensive Roman remains including an impressive mausoleum with a tessellated pavement, Roman tombstones, and cremation and inhumation burials, indicating that in the early days of Roman settlement this was a cemetery along the side of the road leading south from Lincoln. Later the Roman city expanded south and the area became a substantial semi-industrial suburb, with remains of probable shops, mason’s yards and iron working dating to the later Roman occupation.

Formerly Monson Street had three pubs; one, the Coachmaker’s Arms, was often referred to as the first building to be put up, in 1849. The big redbrick office block on the south side towards the High Street, Homer House, (now partly occupied the LEAP charity) was built on the site of a former brewery, later a pea processing factory, (the Wrinkleville Pea Mills), and just to the west of it, at no. 64, was a large steam-powered biscuit bakery.

Homer House itself was designed by Frederick Gibbard and partners, who are best known for Liverpool Catholic Cathedral.

Across Monson street and Immediately on your right is the Unitarian Chapel, the oldest non-conformist place of worship in Lincoln, built originally in 1725/6 by Daniel Disney, a member of a prominent Lincolnshire family (and yes, Walt may well be descended from them). It was altered in 1891 and subsequently, but in sympathy with the original building, and has a charming interior and a pleasant garden. The old town stocks were installed somewhere close to the chapel, along with a watch-house.

Opposite the Unitarian Chapel is the magnificent baroque-style Central Methodist church of 1805, which has a beautiful interior. It’s not strictly part of the Sincil Bank area but admire its architecture – because on the east side, just a bit further on, there was the equally-striking Hannah Memorial Wesleyan (Methodist) Chapel of 1874, a cross between classical and baroque with giant Corinthian columns and an immense stone pediment. It stood on the site of the

medieval church of Holy Trinity, demolished c. 1555 for roadstone. The Hannah chapel was disgracefully demolished in 1965 and replaced with the present brick edifice, the Thomas Cooper Memorial Baptist Church, another of Frederick Gibbard and partner's efforts, in 1972.

**13):** Carry on and cross over Portland Street and on your right there is the fine new Magistrates Courts building, one of the better new builds in Lincoln. On the right of the Courts is a small, round single story building now used as a fast food outlet. At this point, between Argos on the west side and the new court building on the east was a level crossing for one of the two railway lines that cluttered up Lincoln's High Street. This was the Midland railway, opened 1846. The round building is the former wheelhouse for the level crossing of c. 1880.

**14):** For really lousy building and an outstanding example of urban vandalism, walk further down to Sibthorp House, a ghastly office block slung up in 1962 on the site of a fine single-story Palladian mansion of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century incorporating a 14<sup>th</sup> century medieval town house, all demolished in 1957.

Tentercroft Street and the car park is next on your right. As you stroll back along Tentercroft Street look out on the left hand side for the former yard, offices and residence of Howson's Builders. This firm built many of the houses in the Sincil Bank area.

We hope you have enjoyed this walk around Sincil Bank. Residents and the City of Lincoln Council are making great efforts to improve this area and it is to be hoped that any future walks in the Banks will show the results of these efforts.

## SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION:

More details and some of the sources for the information in this walk can be found in the History of Sincil Bank by Nick and Corinne Dore, which can be found at:

[https://94717ad1-15c1-43e5-92fd-7aa43c0f637b.filesusr.com/ugd/7d3be9\\_bf149e0b0b1140ecb79b37c8b1556c60.pdf](https://94717ad1-15c1-43e5-92fd-7aa43c0f637b.filesusr.com/ugd/7d3be9_bf149e0b0b1140ecb79b37c8b1556c60.pdf) (this can be found on the site below under “Neighbourhood Team, Documents/Downloads)

Further information on the local community can be found at:

<https://www.sincilbankcommunity.co.uk/>

Much of the detail in the History of Sincil Bank and in this Walk booklet is drawn from:

<http://heritageconnectlincoln.com/character-area-a-z>

More excellent sources of further information are the Survey of Lincoln’s booklets. See:

<http://www.thesurveyoflincoln.co.uk/>

However, some of the details presented in this Walk are the opinions of the authors, and are at some variance with the published literature, notably the pre-existing water courses, the origin of the name “Sincil” and the extent and construction of the lower city wall.

For some old photographs of the Sincil and Lower High Street area, the Lincolnshire Library publications see “Lincoln As It Was” vols. I – IV, published 1974 – 1981 and subsequently reprinted several times. They are now out of print. Copies can be found in Lincoln Central Library.

In “Lincoln Then And Now” Volume I, written and published by Maurice Hodson in 1982, there are photographs of St. Andrew’s Church, the Hannah Memorial Chapel and Sibthorp House as they were before demolition.



# Some photographs of prominent buildings in Sincil Bank

## Page 1



Robey's Globe Works Entrance



Former Showroom of Fambrini and Daniels.



View of the Cathedral from Sewell's Walk bridge



View of a green Sincil Dyke from Sewell's Walk bridge





## Some photographs of prominent buildings in Sincil Bank. page 2



The former St. Botolph's Church, now the Greek Orthodox Church of Saints Basil and Paisios.



Central Methodist Church,  
High Street



Unitarian Chapel, High Street



Thomas Cooper Memorial Baptist Church, High Street



Former premises of Howson's Builders, Tentercroft Street



Sincil Bank (Map courtesy and copyright of openstreetmap.org)

Footpaths are marked in dotted lines.