



settlement and contain all of the larger villages and towns. The landscape here is almost cosy by Fen standards, with a dense network of winding lanes, trees and farmsteads. Despite later changes, field and settlement patterns reflect the area's Medieval origins and growth, including the piecemeal reclamation of salt marsh and fen. The old Sea Bank shown on Ordnance Survey maps is an important survival that runs for miles across the landscape, marking the high tide line of the former Anglo-Saxon coastline. Remains of Medieval salterns form clusters along its route as it passes through previously coastal villages such as Holbeach Hurn and Surfleet Seas End.

Inland of the Townlands lie the Fens proper – the former freshwater wetlands that were seasonally or permanently wet before drainage. This is the classic Fen landscape of straight drains, straight roads and isolated farmsteads, though even here there is variation reflecting the long history of drainage. Areas reclaimed in Medieval times have some older settlements and churches, especially in the highly elongated parishes south of the Wash. Here, a succession of former fen banks and daughter settlements mark the progress of Medieval colonisation and numerous straight droves for

TOP LEFT: **Ruston Bucyrus dragline and drain, Dogdyke**

LEFT: **River Witham in flood near Five Mile Bridge, Witham Fens.** The Witham Fens between Lincoln and Chapel Hill were drained and enclosed under a series of Acts of Parliament from the late 18th century in connection with dredging and embanking work to the River Witham. Drainage channels or 'delphs' were constructed to carry water from the fens to the river, most of which are still in use today.

FACING PAGE: **storm passing over Moulton Fen**

