



VI : Washingborough to Tattershall Bridge

The Lower Witham Valley

Leaving behind the bustle and drama of Lincoln, the River Witham begins what is perhaps the most tranquil and enigmatic section of its course. As the Lincoln Gap subsides eastwards, the river enters a broad, flat valley of reclaimed fenland bounded on both sides by low hills. This extends for some 20 miles to Dogdyke and the Kymes where it merges with the main Fen basin. The name Lower Witham Valley is often used to describe this stretch of the river and its landscape, especially by archaeologists, and is a useful epithet. Naming the fenland within the Valley is more difficult as the term Witham Fens sometimes refers to all the former fenland draining to the Witham from Long Bennington to Boston. The author has therefore adopted Witham Valley Fens in this book.

Topographically, the contrast between the valley's open fens with their reedy delphs and peaty soils and the wooded valleysides creates an appealing landscape that is unique within the Lincolnshire Fens, simultaneously expansive yet contained and even intimate. Added to

this, the valley has a rich heritage including internationally important archaeology and a dozen former monastic sites. The drainage history of the Lower Witham Valley provides further interest for the landscape explorer, commencing with the Car Dyke of probable Roman origin.

The river itself is different in character here from its winding middle reaches in the Vale of Trent. As a key transport route between Lincoln and



FACING PAGE: **River Witham, Five Mile Bridge**

RIGHT: **Bardney Limewoods**