

NEW DISCOVERIES

From ancient monuments to modern-day celebrities, there are many surprising aspects to Lincolnshire

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki



Carol Kubicki...

...and her partner, Anthony, use their Devon Tempest to pursue their hobbies of walking and cycling while exploring historical and natural environments

FAR RIGHT The impressive gatehouse of Thornton Abbey

BELOW LEFT The lake in the Hubbard's Hills Country Park

BELOW RIGHT The avenue that leads to Brackenhurst Hall

I have a friend who was born and brought up in Scunthorpe; let's call her Maggi. For a number of years she has been trying to persuade me to visit the delights of her home county – she knows I have never been and that I enjoy visiting new places. Inevitably, Maggi's stories of pretty picnic spots, lovely country houses and delightful market towns in north Lincolnshire wore me down and a trip was planned. We set off with Maggi's final instruction in my ears, "But don't bother going to Scunthorpe!"

From our campsite on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, we set off on foot for the market town of Louth, via what was promisingly marked on the map as Hubbard's Hills.

It became apparent that Hubbard's Hills are not actually hills but a lovely steep-sided wooded valley, formed during the last ice age, through which a shallow, gravelly, chalk stream now flows.

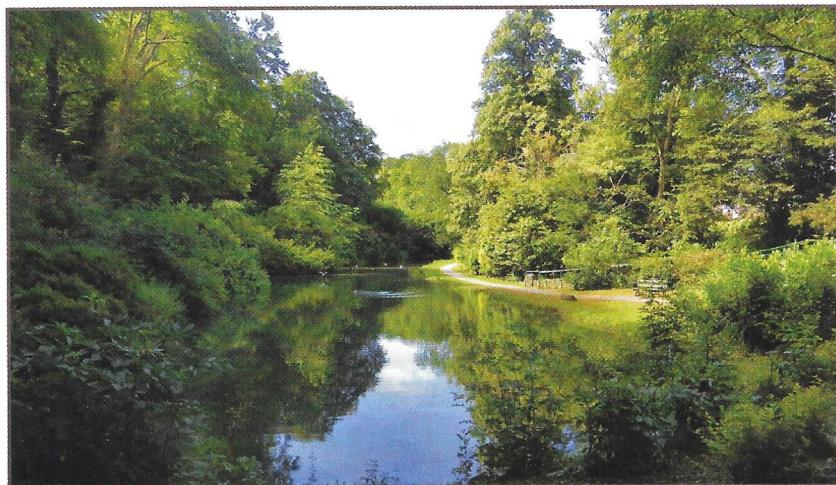
This pleasant country park exists thanks to a love story. Auguste Pahud came to Louth from Switzerland to teach languages in the nineteenth century. He married a

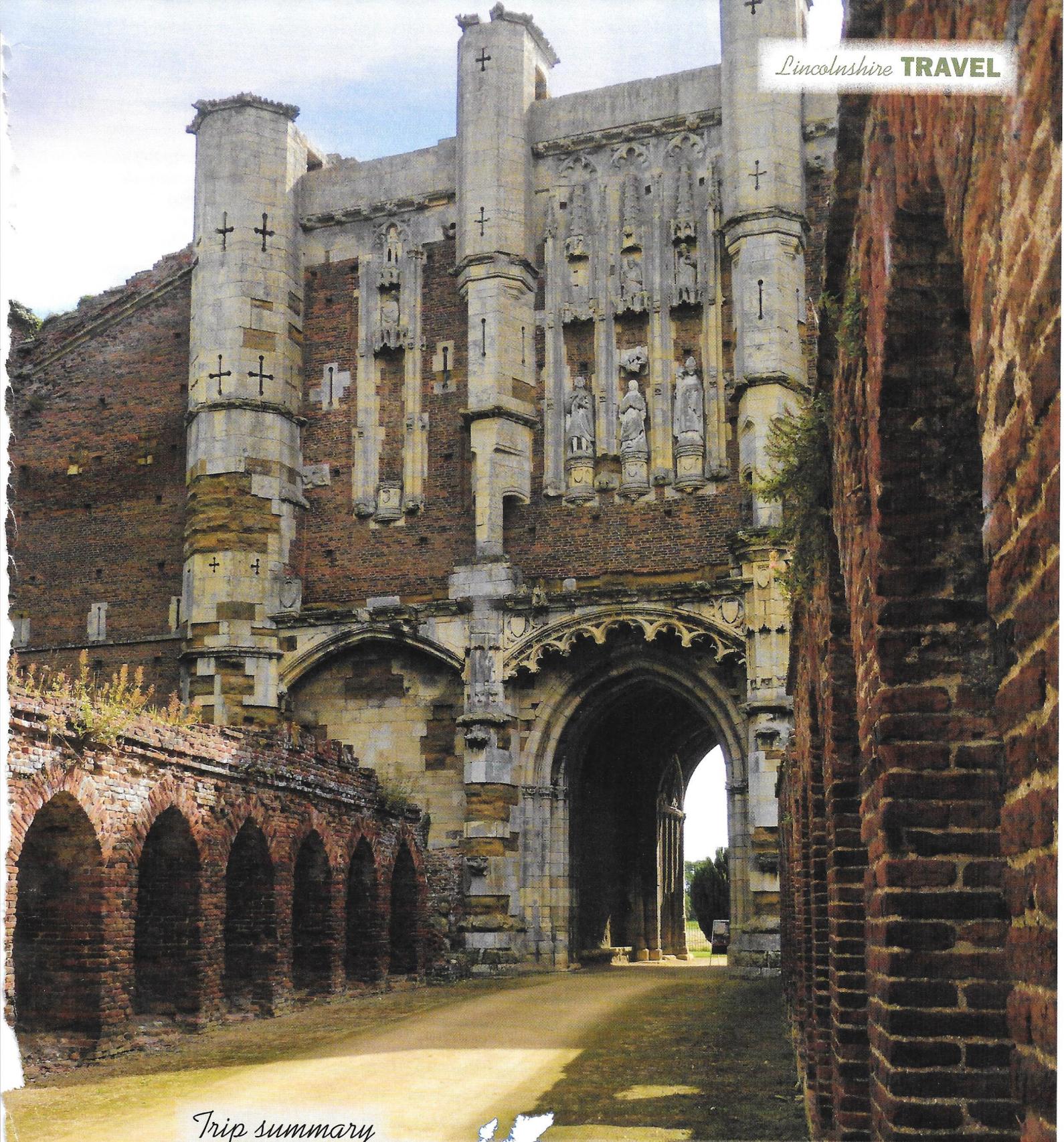
local girl, Annie, and was heartbroken when Annie died after just a few years. Auguste's sadness led him to take his own life, but not before he had left £25,000 to the town that had bought the couple together, in memory of Annie.

Hubbard's Hill was among the purchases the trustees of Auguste's bequest made and the Edwardian pleasure garden was opened to the public in August 1907 with huge celebrations. Over 100 years on I could see this is still a cherished local park.

We followed the winding stream through the trees, crossing the bridge to see the Pahud memorial and sat watching a joyful toddler on the bridge learning how to play Pooh sticks with his parents. Following the path alongside the lake, busy with mallards, coots and black-headed gulls all eager to be fed, we stopped to admire the pretty old mill before making our way through Westgate Fields to the town.

It is hard to miss the tall spire of St James' Church and, for a small sum, we were allowed to climb the 198 well-worn stone spiral steps to the top. For me, with a hint of claustrophobia, the most frightening thing was that the heavy door to the tower was ►





Trip summary

OUR MOTORHOME

2015 Devon Tempest on a Renault Master MWB 2.3-litre Energy DCI. This is our second Devon Conversions 'van. At 5.3m we think it's enormous and, with a bathroom, also luxurious



2015 Devon Tempest



THE JOURNEY We travelled to Lincolnshire from our home in **Salford** along the M62, M18, M180 and the A15 and spent three nights on sites in August

THE COSTS

| | |
|--|--------|
| Fuel average 34mpg | £55 |
| Site fees | £44 |
| Entrance fees two adults: St James' Church tower, Thornton Abbey and Gainsborough Old Hall | £27.40 |

350 miles

Total £126.40

INFORMATION

Lincolnshire Wolds AONB



lincswolds.org.uk

Louth



louthuk.co.uk

Tennyson Trail leaflet



motorhome.ma/tennysontrail

Hubbard's Hills Trust



hubbardshills.co.uk

Gainsborough DMV and Thornton Abbey



english-heritage.org.uk

Mount Pleasant Windmill



northlincs.com/micro-site/mountpleasant.htm

Julian's Bower Turf Maze



stone-circles.org.uk/stone/juliansbower.htm

locked behind us, with instructions to ring the bell when we returned.

For another visitor, the height was terrifying. I found her gripping the back wall of the viewing platform waiting to descend when I emerged, breathless, into the open. With a sturdy stone parapet between me and the drop, I felt safe enough to enjoy the fantastic 360-degree view over Louth and the Lincolnshire Wolds.

Back at ground level, we chatted to the enthusiastic volunteers in the airy church and I wandered around admiring the needlework on the array of colourful kneelers. Near the pulpit was a quirky display of scale-model knitted churches. Yes, you did read that right! These are local churches represented in wool and knit-one-pearl-one.

Outside, we walked round the church to see the life-sized sculpture we had spotted from above that shows a confused man trying to make sense of the meridian line that runs through Louth. We sauntered around the market, bustling and lively with shoppers and market traders pitching their bargains. We found sustenance in a friendly

teashop before heading back into the countryside via the 'Round Louth' walk.

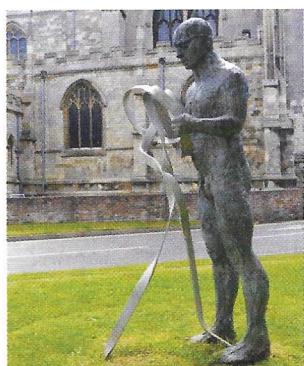
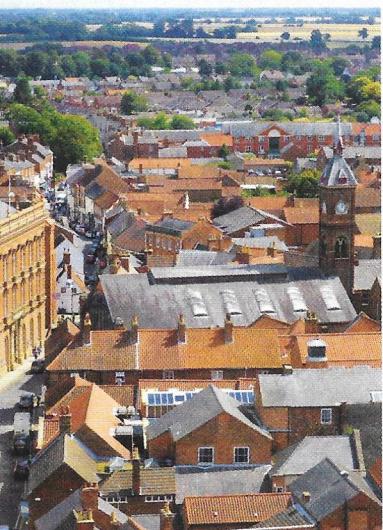
Love was still in the air as we followed the elegant, tree-lined avenue to Brackenborough Hall, where caterers were scurrying around, getting everything ready for a wedding. The path took us through fields to Little Grimsby, where the tiny whitewashed St Edith's Church was also festive with smart wedding guests. Two scruffy walkers were certainly out of place here and we didn't linger, but continued through fields of cereals and around copses of trees and tidy farms.

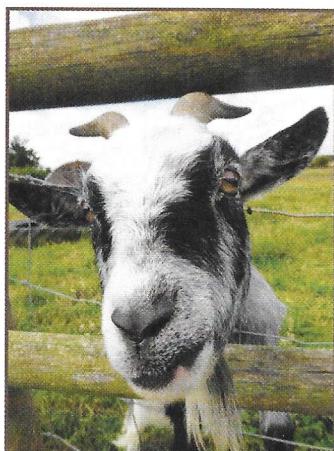
I had expected Lincolnshire to be flat; Maggi hadn't warned me that this eastern county went up and down.

Near the campsite, we spotted two hares bounding up the path in front of us, their speed and long ears distinguishing them from rabbits. The air teemed with the calls of wood pigeons, calling "my-toe-bleeds-Betty", their wings making that distinctive clattering sound as they flew off.

In contrast, a hunting kestrel hovered quietly above the fields.

When you start to look, evidence of





“Houses of **warm** yellow-coloured stone, a thatched pub and the **exquisite** Memorial Hall, Tealby really is an **attractive** place”

ABOVE CLOCKWISE Pretty houses in the picturesque village of Tealby; faces on the columns in the Ramblers' Church in Walesby; a friendly goat at Willingham Fayre Ice Cream Parlour

LEFT CLOCKWISE The view over Louth from the top of St James' Church spire; walking on quiet country lanes in the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB; the Meridian Man statue in Louth

previous generations can be spotted, written into the landscape and the place names. I find it comforting to know I am a small link in this long chain of human history.

We drove through a Lincolnshire Wolds landscape dotted with insignificant bumps of burial mounds from the past to Tealby, reputedly Lincolnshire's prettiest village. The suffix 'by' is a remnant of the Vikings, which is common in Lincolnshire and means farmstead or village.

With houses of warm yellow-coloured stone, a thatched pub and the exquisite 1930s Tennyson d'Eyncourt Memorial Hall, Tealby really is an attractive place to stroll around. Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt was the uncle of Alfred Tennyson, the poet. He was from the rich and landed side of this family and considered Tennyson's poetry 'horrid rubbish indeed'.

Another illustrious local connection is Elton John's song-writing partner, Bernie Taupin. The story goes that the local golden-coloured stone used to build a farm track inspired him to write the song *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*.

From Tealby, it is a short walk along the ups and downs of the Viking Way towards Walesby and the isolated Ramblers' Church.

Walesby village drifted downhill from All Saint's Ramblers' church over the centuries and, by 1914, had a new church.

This left an abandoned building remote on the ridge, with extensive views over the plain. The medieval interior, with rounded Norman arches and columns decorated with carvings of rows of heads, was neglected for some years until renovated in the 1930s. A stunning stained glass window depicting walkers and cyclists was installed some years later, reflecting the pastime of many of the visitors to the church.

After so much history and exercise it was time for refreshments and the Willingham Fayre Ice Cream Parlour at North Willingham was just what I needed. A tasty ginger ice cream cornet eaten in sight of the very cows that had provided the milk is local food at its best.

While you might have read about my passion for ice cream before, you probably don't know that I am also an enthusiastic bread maker. This is not just an occasional activity; I shun supermarket bread. If I get to choose, my last meal would be good bread and strong cheese, followed by Italian pistachio ice cream.

Where is this revelation heading? The ➤



TOP TIPS

If you don't want to walk from Tealby, the nearest parking for **Walesby Ramblers' Church** is at the village hall in Walesby.

This is a small car park and large units may have to look for parking on one of the village roads

There are two car parks for **Hubbard's Hills** and both of these have ramped access to the level gravel path through the valley. The Crowtree Lane car park by the café is reached along a narrow lane but this is not busy and can be achieved by most motorhomes

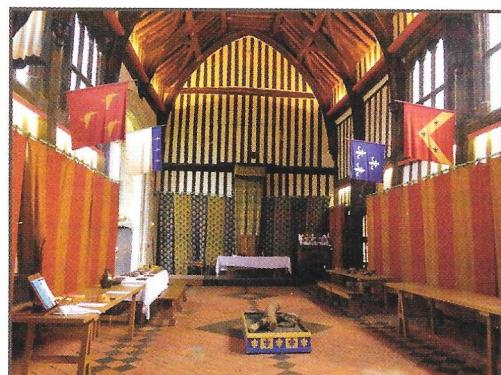
answer is to Mount Pleasant Windmill. I couldn't miss visiting this four-sail windmill, where they still mill flour and bake bread. We managed to find space on the small car park around the windmill and had a delicious bread-focused lunch. I came away with some bags of flour and a large sourdough loaf.

If you spot the acronym DMV on your map you might, like me, check Google and be none the wiser. Does it stand for diurnal mood variation or dynamic management views? It turns out it is deserted medieval village, quite common in this part of Lincolnshire.

The rich farmland and wealthy landowners of medieval Lincolnshire led to a burgeoning population. Many of these villages were abandoned by the fifteenth century thanks to changes in climate, the Black Death and a move to sheep farming, leaving one of the highest concentrations of DMVs in England.

Photographs of Gainsthorpe DMV from the air clearly reveal a pattern of houses and streets. However, on the ground, I wandered across a field with a bewildering jumble of bumps and troughs, watched by a small herd of toffee-coloured cows. Clearly, a DMV is best appreciated from above.

On the other hand, Julian's Bower – a turf-cut maze in the village of Alkborough



– was still visible and easy to appreciate. Maggi had told me that Julian's Bower was not to be missed, but Alkborough felt like the end of the world as we skirted around the to-be-avoided Scunthorpe and followed lanes towards a wide horizon.

This grassy, ancient maze is in a lovely setting overlooking the River Trent and is technically a labyrinth, as I found after I had diligently wound my way around the path to the centre. The first record of Julian's Bower was in the seventeenth century, but no one knows who originally cut it. As Alkborough Church has copies of the maze in its porch floor and east window, the theory that local monks made it seems plausible.

After losing myself in the labyrinthine world of Julian's Bower for a while, we headed down the lanes to a campsite in Burton-upon-Stather, another Viking remnant, meaning landing place.

This lovely village has vestiges of shipbuilding and brickwork industries, as well as a WWII tank ramp that allowed tanks to be tested in the mudflats.

After our customary brew, we strolled down to the banks of the Trent and found Ferry House Inn at the old ferry crossing where a live band played. We sat in the evening sunshine with a beer, enjoying cover versions of 80s classics.

We thought we had seen everything ▶

ABOVE CLOCKWISE Mount Pleasant Windmill near Kirton in Lindsey; Julian's Bower labyrinth; the Great Hall at Gainsborough Old Hall

that ruined abbeys have to offer but, while washing up at the campsite, I spotted a photograph that really impressed me. So, we changed our plans and followed the lanes to Thornton Abbey.

It is the fourteenth century gatehouse that is extraordinary at Thornton Abbey; the grandeur and size of this gatehouse demonstrates in bricks and mortar the wealth that existed in this part of north Lincolnshire in medieval times. We had the defensive gatehouse to ourselves. Climbing through the maze of rooms and corridors, I heard a feline wailing sound. At first I thought that my husband, Anthony, was teasing me with his cat impressions but, investigating a winding stone staircase, I was surprised to find a young cat bounding up. She proceeded to follow me around, posing in the stone windows.

Back on our planned itinerary, we drove upriver from Burton-upon-Stather to the small town of Gainsborough. Set incongruously in the town centre, surrounded by supermarkets and offices, is the charming Gainsborough Old Hall.

This medieval manor house of brick

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THE MOTORHOME SHOW SEASON FINALE
LINCOLN

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outandaboutlive.co.uk/shows

and timber frame has a haphazard layout that I found disorientating, yet appealing. While the Great Hall is magnificent, it was the vast, well-preserved brick kitchen that I found most fascinating.

With a history going back 500 years, the hall has many famous connections, including John Wesley, the Methodist preacher, who visited a number of times in the eighteenth century.

I was also intrigued to learn about the house's chocolate connection. William Rose was a tenant here and was also the inventor of the world's first mechanical packing machine. This machinery was put to good use to automatically wrap sweets for Cadbury. This close working relationship is remembered to this day in Cadbury Roses.

Heading home along the M62, I mulled over the highlights of our trip I would enjoy sharing with Maggi when I next saw her. I wondered if she would take the opportunity to say, "I told you so," if I admitted how much I had liked north Lincolnshire. My only slight regret was not having the chance to see if Maggi was right about Scunthorpe. Maybe next time... **mmm**

BELOW LEFT The brick and timber frame building of Gainsborough Old Hall

BELOW RIGHT Looking down on the River Trent where it meets the River Ouse



WE STAYED AT

Estate Office Caravan Club CL (aka The Old Hall Caravan Site), South Elkington, Louth LN11 0RY

01507 604632 or 07970 080012

elkington-properties.co.uk

All year

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: £12 (members only)

Brookside Caravan and Camping Park, Stather Road, Burton-upon-Stather DN15 9DH

01724 721369

brooksidecaravanpark.co.uk

4 March - 31 October

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: £20