Highways and Byways of Lincolnshire Part 1

As many of us will no doubt be doing over these difficult weeks, I looked amongst our many books for something previously unread and came upon this book printed in 1927. As I often do with such a book, I scanned for items of interest first to help me decide if it justified a more in-depth read – and found some intriguing paragraphs by writer *Willingham Franklin Rawnsley* having toured the area 'by the ubiquitous motor' – and hope you find them as interesting as I did! Susan Milsom

Highways and Byways of Lincolnshire, First edition 1914, reprinted 1927, first Pocket Edition 1926

Author: Willingham Franklin Rawnsley (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willingham_Franklin_Rawnsley)

In the *Preface*: "*I have perhaps taken the title Highways and Byways more literally than has usually been done by writing this interesting series, and in endeavouring to describe the county and its ways I have followed the course of all the main roads radiating from each large town, noticing most of the places through or near which they pass, and also pointing out some of the more picturesque byways, and describing the lie of the country. But I have all along supposed the tourist to be travelling by motor and have accordingly said very little about Footpaths. This in a mountainous country would be entirely wrong, but Lincolnshire as a whole is not a pedestrian's county. It is, however, a land of constantly occurring magnificent views…… I may add that, thanks to that modern devourer of time and space – the ubiquitous motor car – I have been personally to visit almost everything I have described….*"

In addition to the paragraphs I've transcribed below, he writes of *Great Cotes* – spelling it without the 'a' as we do today- as having a church which *'well repays a visit'*. Grimsby however, whilst '*not at all an imposing or handsome town*' is impressive in terms of its trade:

"*the length of the timber docks, and the size and varied life in the great fish docks, the pontoons which project into the river and are crowded with fishing boats, discharging tons of fish and taking in quantities of ice, are a wonderful sight*. *165,510 tons of fish were dealt with in 1902 – it is probably 170,000 tons now* [1927]; *and 300 tons of ice a day is made close by."*

He goes on for a good half-page to describe what we are left to assume is St James', now Grimsby Minster, because he doesn't actually name it: "*the old church…… inside it is fine and spacious, and in effect cathedral-like…….The proportions of the whole church are pleasing, and its size is very striking"* – but "*dreadful to relate, the columns and capitals are all painted grey….*and *All the doors , curiously enough, are painted green outside"*!

The following is transcripts of printed pages.

Lincolnshire roads (pp207)

"A few years ago, when the first motor made its way into Lincolnshire, the road from Gainsborough to Louth was one long stretch of small loose stones. It had never even dreamt of a steam roller, and there were always ruts for the wheels, and as Lincolnshire carriage wheels were set three or four inches wider apart so that they could accommodate themselves to the cart ruts, when we brought a carriage up from Oxfordshire it was found impossible to used it till the axles had been cut and lengthened so that it could be run in the ruts."

The Hull Ferry (pp217-218)

"The Great Central Railway runs south from Holland pier to Ulceby, and then splits right and left to Brigg and Grimsby; and here let me warn anyone who thinks to bring a motor over by the ferry to or from Hull. The sloping stage at New Holland is fairly easy, though the boats' moveable gangway is not provided with an inclined approach board, the simplest thing in the world, but each car or truck has to bump on and off

it with a four-inch rise, and an extra man or two are required to lift the wheels of each loaded truck on or off – a childishly stupid way arrangement which reflects on credit on the brains of the officers of the Central Railway, who own the ferry service; but on the Hull side matters are much worse, and I don't think any method of loading or unloading even in a remote Asiatic port can be so barbaric and out-of-date as that which the Central Railway provides for its long-suffering customers. To get a motor on board from Hull is both difficult and dangerous; after threading an intricate maze of close-set pillars a car has to go down a very steep and slippery gangway, and when at the bottom has to turn at right angles with no room to back, and across a moveable gangway so narrow that the side railing has to be taken off and a loose plank added to take the wheels; then, whilst the car hangs over the water on the slippery slope, several men lift the front part round to the left and then, with a great effort, drag the back wheels round to the right, and after filling up a yawning gap between the slope and the gang-plank by putting a piece of board of some kind, but with no fit, to prevent the wheel from dropping through or the car going headlong into the sea, the machine is got on to the deck; and then all sorts of heavy goods on hand-barrows are brought on, four men having to hang on to each down the slippery planks, and these are piled all round the motor, and all are taken off on the other side with incredible exertions before the motor has a chance to move. The crossing itself takes but twenty minutes, but the whole process of getting on, crossing and getting off, occupied us two hours, and a really big car would never have been able to get over at all."

Immingham (pp222-223)

"Immingham village is more than two miles from the haven, and here the most enormous works have long been in progress. Indeed, at Immingham a new port has sprung up in the last five years, and to this the Great Central Railway, who so utterly neglect the convenience of passengers with vehicles at Hull ferry, have given the most enlightened attention, and by using the latest inventions and all the most advanced methods and laying out their docks in a large and forward-looking way to cover an enormous area, have created a dock which can compete successfully with any provincial port in England.

A deep-water channel leads to the dock gates on the north side of what is the deepest dock on the east coast, with forty-five aces of water over thirty feet deep. It runs east and west, and it is about half a mile long. A quay 1,250 feet long, projects into the western half of this, leaving room for vessels to load or unload on either side of it, direct from or into the railway trucks. A timber-quay occupies the north-west side of the dock, and the grain elevator is at the east end, while all along the whole of the south side runs the coaling quay. There are at least twenty-seven cranes able to lift two, three, five, ten, and even fifty tons on the various quays, and on the coaling-quay eight hoists , on to which the trucks are lifted and the coal shot into the vessels, after which the truck returns to the yard by gravitation automatically. Each of these hoists can deal with 700 tons of coal an hour, and as each hoist has eight sidings allotted to it there are 320 waggons ready for each. One of these hoists is moveable so that two holds of a vessel can be worked simultaneously. The means for quick and easy handling of the trucks , full and empty, buy hydraulic power, and light for the whole dock also is supplied from a gigantic installation in the power-house, near the north-west corner of the dock; and this quick handling is essential, for the many miles of sidings can hold 11,600 waggons, carrying 1116,000 tons of coal or more, besides finding room for empties. The coal is brought from Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Notts and Lincolnshire, and not far short of 3,000,000 tons of coal will be now sent out of England from this port alone[1]. It seems to the writer that to send away at this tremendous rate from all our big coaling ports the article on which all our industries virtually depend is a folly which no words are too strong to condemn. With coal England has the means of supplying all her own wants for many generations, but it is not inexhaustible, and when it is gone, where will England be? Will anything that may be found ever take its place?"

[1] The coal output in the United Kingdom in 1913 was 287,411,869 tons, an increase of 27 million on the previous year.