

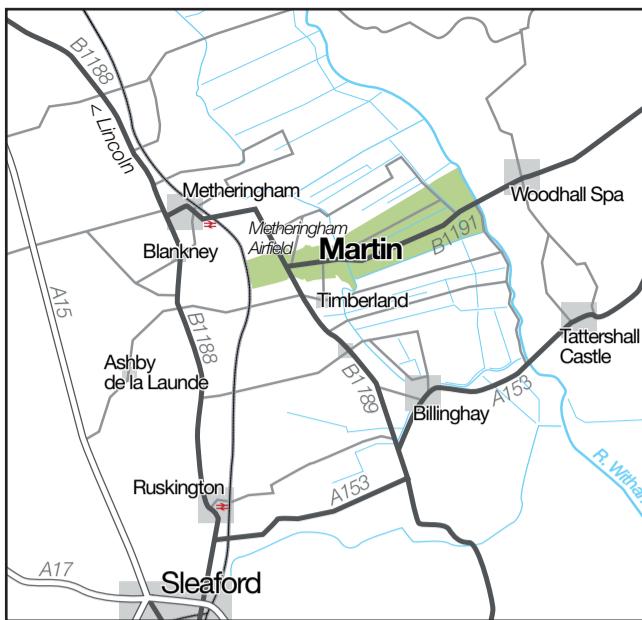
Martin

The landscape, history and rights of way of a fenland parish



Looking east across the fens of the Witham Valley from Car Dyke.

Sarah Wroot design 2016

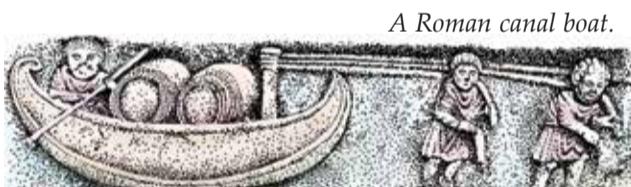


Footpaths preserve the routes on which people have moved across the parish landscape, often for centuries. Martin's footpaths reflect its history: most are on the high, dry ground where people lived, walking to and from their farm fields or nearby villages. No paths were needed on the Witham Valley Fens, which until recently were wetlands on which all who lived in the parish could graze their livestock.

Other people hope to enjoy walking the footpaths of Martin. Please clean up after your dog, and do not allow dogs to defecate in grazed fields. In spring and early summer, please keep dogs under control to avoid disturbing birds nesting on or near the ground in fields and hedgerows. Please take your litter home!

If you have questions about the path network or wish to report a problem, please contact the Martin Parish Clerk? fill in the Report Form accessed via www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/countryside/public-rights-of-way?

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A Roman canal boat.

Medieval and Post-medieval Martin

Until the Witham fens were drained in the 18th and 19th centuries Lincolnshire parishes such as Martin (then a township in the large parish of Timberland) were good places to live. Small farms were entitled to graze livestock on common land - the wet fen and less fertile areas on the ridge - producing manure to enrich the arable fields. Hay from the fen kept livestock over winter, while fish and waterfowl could be sold. All these products could be shipped by barge from **wharves** on **Timberland Delph** to the Witham and on to Lincoln and Boston. The population of Martin grew as new farming techniques improved productivity and people moved here to take advantage of these opportunities.

The importance of transport on the Witham ensured that as early as the 14th century a Royal Commission

The landscape of Martin

The western half of Martin lies on a ridge of Oxford Clay deposited on the ocean floor during the Jurassic, about 170 million years ago. On the top of the ridge much of the clay lies under sand and gravel left by the ice sheet that covered this area about 350,000 years ago. Rainwater stored in the porous sand and gravel fed the wells that once supplied water to the village. Few people farmed the poor, stony soils high on the ridge; this left an area of uncultivated heath on which WWII Metheringham Airfield was built.

To the east the ridge drops abruptly into a valley cut by the glacial River Trent swollen by melting ice and rain 13,000 years ago. Today the much smaller Witham winds through the valley.

Bogs created by the slow-flowing Witham flooding the valley became peat as the sea level rose about 4500 years ago and the slow-flowing Witham began to flood the valley. The Wash moved up the valley as far as Fiskerton about 3500 years ago, then retreated, leaving behind layers of mud and silt. The River Witham cut new channels in the silt and created wetlands that became more peat. The floor of the valley now lies 3–8m below the surface of the Witham Fens. As the peat disappears, the stream networks of the wetlands become visible as **roddons**, ridges in the roads and sinuous lines of pale silt contrasting with the peat on satellite images of the fens.

At the end of the Bronze Age, roughly 2500 years ago, the Witham was flowing down the western side of a valley of wet grassland, bogs and slow-flowing streams. Over the next two thousand years the river moved east to its current position, probably leaving behind the large mere or lake for which Martin was named – from the Old English *mere-tun* or 'settlement by the pond'.

was sent to investigate problems with navigation and flooding. Works to improve the river flow and drain the fens (or at least reduce flooding) were discussed for the next 300 years or so until the Parliamentary Act enabling draining was passed in 1761. **Dales Head Dyke** marks the limit of the initial drainage in 1787, when the Dales were thought necessary to catch and store river floods, but by 1839 the Dales were drained and Martin Dales had appeared.

Farms on the newly drained fields required labour: Martin's population grew from 303 in 1801 to 894 in 1851 with many new dwellings in the fen. In 1866 Martin was separated from Timberland as a new civil parish. **Holy Trinity Church** was built in 1876 (the tower was added in 1911). St Hugh's, an iron mission church (no longer standing) was erected in Martin Dales in 1891 to serve the growing settlement.

Today Martin continues to grow as people who work in Lincoln and elsewhere choose to live in this pleasant village set in an historic agricultural landscape.



Martin in 1856. Windmills (red circles) pumped water off the fen into the drains, and new dwellings shelter farmworkers on the new fields. What was to become Metheringham Airfield is largely empty; 'Gorse Cover' suggests rough heath vegetation. Note the wharves on Car Dyke and the Witham, and the Decoy (blue), a man-made pond on which waterfowl were lured into nets.

Roman Martin

Prehistoric Martin

People lived in the forest that covered this area 10,000 years ago: a flint core used for making flint blades was found north of **Moor Lane**. Neolithic and **Bronze age axes** found in Blankney were probably used to fell trees 5000 years ago; the people who used them may have been living in settlements near the river in a fen valley rich in wildlife: a **Bronze Age barrow** (burial mound) is one of several emerging from the valley fen as the peat disappears.

The central Witham Valley is known for a series of causeways aiding travel across the wet fen such as the Iron Age timber causeway at Fiskerton. Although they now seem to link settlements on one side of the valley with Christian religious sites on the other, objects ceremonially deposited at each end of the causeways and in the River Witham itself from the Bronze Age into the medieval period suggest that at least some causeways may be part of an ancient ritual landscape. **South Drove** is thought to follow the line of one of these causeways.

Anglo Saxon Martin

Although no Roman sites are known in Martin, Lincolnshire was a prosperous area in Roman times. One of the most famous Roman projects in England runs through the parish: **Car Dyke** was once thought to be a Roman canal. Recent research indicates that although it may have been used for local transport it was primarily intended as a **catchwater drain**, diverting water flowing off the ridge away from grassland at the edge of the fen.

Anglo Saxon Martin

The Old English origin of Martin's name suggests it was known to the Angles from southern Denmark who settled here from about AD400 to AD600. They brought with them a tradition of small freehold farms with access to common grazing that proved a major influence on the future development of the parish.



The 'WATER RAIL WAY' is part of National Cycle Route 1. Here it runs on the line of the Great Northern Railway's Lincolnshire Loop Line linking the River Trent wharves to Lincoln, Boston and Peterborough 1848-1963.

'St. Leonard's Without' was the Abbey chapel.
ruins of Kirkstead Abbey

Much of Martin South Drove is thought to follow the line of a medieval & earlier causeway raised above the wet fen to take people to the river crossing.

