

Lincolnshire Windmills

by Nathanael Hodge, Rex Wailes
Collection, Mills Archive, UK

The county of Lincolnshire in England was renowned for its cereal cultivation. In the 18th century new developments in millwrighting, centring on the city of Hull and drawing on the expertise of Dutch millwrights, created the distinctive Lincolnshire tower mill. These were typically very tall, with a white ogee cap which became known as the “Lincolnshire cap”, first introduced by John Smeaton. He also introduced the use of a cast iron cross for mounting sails. This enabled mills to have more than the standard four sails, with some having five, six or eight. Rex Wailes carried out his survey of the surviving Lincolnshire windmills in 1951-1952 with his friend Paul Baker (shown here holding a piece of mill machinery). Despite bad weather a number of visits to mills were made at Whitsun 1951, by which point two of the three historic ‘parts’ of Lincolnshire, Kesteven and Holland, had been completely surveyed, with only the third ‘part’, Lindsey, remaining. Wailes and Baker found no working mills. There were six derelict mills standing in Holland and seven in Kesteven, with 21 in Holland and 12 in Kesteven remaining only as stumps. This was a stark contrast to an earlier survey of 1923-33, which found 11 windmills still working in Holland and nine in Kesteven.

Wailes’ collection of photos compiled as part of the survey included those taken during the mill visits in 1951-52 along with earlier images. They have recently been digitised by the Mills Archive and are available online at <https://catalogue.millsarchive.org/lincolnshire-windmills-survey> with some of them included in the article.

