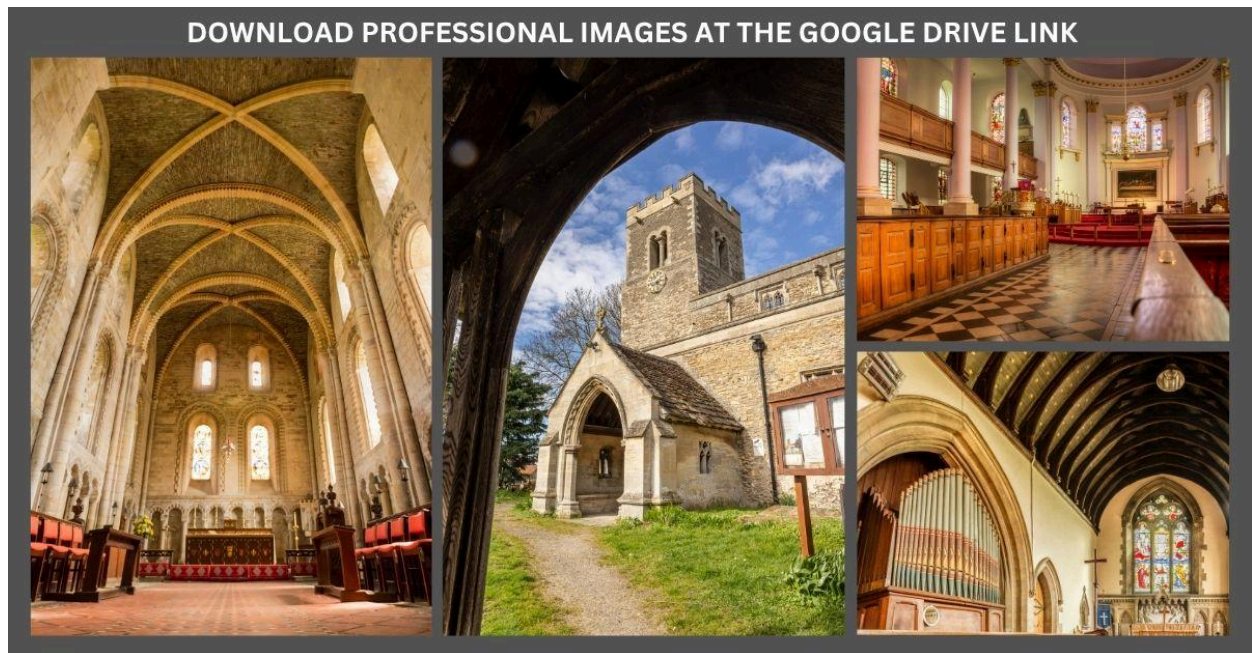


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Click this link to view/download 28 professional church photographs, filenames give church name and location plus credits required:

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News provided by: West Lindsey Churches Festival, 22th April 2026

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE

- **A record-breaking 119 churches welcome visitors to the 30th West Lindsey Churches Festival, taking place over two weekends: 9-10 and 16-17 May, 2026**

For two weekends this May, lovers of heritage and history have a choice of 119 Lincolnshire churches and chapels to visit for free, as the West Lindsey Churches Festival celebrates its 30th year and sees a record number of buildings taking part.

The first weekend (9-10 May) will see 58 churches in the east of the area take part, with 61 churches opening for the second weekend (16-17 May) to the west. Visitors will be exploring the rural landscape to the north of the cathedral city of Lincoln, much of it within the Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape.

Visitors will find each church offers a unique experience that could include stunning architecture, stained glass, fascinating wood carvings, historic monuments, and graveyards full of stories. And this is made possible by hundreds of church volunteers, who add to the festival their knowledge of local history, plant and book sales, flower displays, exhibitions and bell ringing.

Refreshments are one of the main attractions of the festival, with churches offering treats like homemade cakes, cream teas and plum bread. Lunch can also be enjoyed at 28 of the churches taking part, with homemade soups, sausages in a bun, bacon sandwiches, hot roast beef rolls, ploughman's lunches, and quiches, among the many meals on offer.

Music is also central to the event, with 74 churches inviting the public to play their organ, with many exceptional instruments included in that offer. For those that like to listen to organs played by professionals, there will also be resident and visiting organists playing music through both weekends (full details to be confirmed on the website).

Traditionally, the West Lindsey Churches Festival has offered visitors a range of historic sites located across the district. West Lindsey is a rural landscape to the north of the county of Lincolnshire, encompassing the market towns of Gainsborough, Caistor, and Market Rasen, as well as the idyllic Lincolnshire landscape and its many little villages.

But since 2025, the festival map has expanded beyond West Lindsey's borders, and welcomed in churches in neighbouring areas: North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and East Lindsey. New festival churches can be found in and around larger towns like Immingham, Brigg, and Scunthorpe, and at the heart of historic market towns and villages like Thornton Curtis, Epworth, Horkstow, Amcotts, and Crowle.

These new buildings join the ranks of churches that have taken part in the event through the past 30 years, and helped make this festival one of the biggest open churches festivals in Europe.

Festival chair Paul Howitt-Cowen said:

"We are delighted to reach our 30th year, which shows how much these historic and sacred places are cherished by the public, as treasure houses of our shared history. From nationally important monuments at Hainton, fourteenth-century stained glass at Kingerby, one of the country's most impressive Norman doorways in Middle

Rasen, a rare 12th century black Tournai font at Thornton Curtis and a very rare rood screen and loft at Coates by Stow - the list of astonishing artifacts you can stumble upon in our churches is very long! We're indebted to West Lindsey District Council for their sponsorship of this event, which has been essential in making it happen over the decades.

"A tour of festival churches will take you through beautiful villages and vibrant market towns, as well as remote rural locations where time seems to stand still. Each church and chapel taking part is a gem waiting to be discovered!"

Anyone interested in a spot of 'church crawling' this May (the name given to the hobby of visiting churches!) should visit the website www.churchesfestival.info. There they will find a page for each church taking part (easily reached via the A-Z listing page) and a Google map to plan a tour. People can also browse a 56 page event brochure via the website, or order a hard copy.

The festival is active on Facebook and Instagram, where each church and chapel is featured with a post, and asks visitors to share images taken during their festival weekends using the hashtag #LoveLincsChurches.

Highlights from the two weekends

The West Lindsey Churches Festival organisers have put together the following highlights for the 2026 event:

Highlights for the first weekend 9th - 10th May

The first weekend takes place in the east of the area and there really is something to see and do for everyone.

Where will you start? The George Gilbert Scott Saxby All Saints? The outstanding 12th century black Tournai font at Thornton Curtis, St Lawrence? Or perhaps Immingham, St Andrew with its links to the Mayflower Pilgrims?

James Fowler's Victorian Early English style masterpiece Binbrook, St Mary & St Gabriel and Riby, St Edmund will offer spire and tower tours with rare behind the scenes access to clocks, bells, and magnificent views.

On Saturday there is a Teddy bear parachuting event for all the family, where bears can parachute from the church tower at Cadney, All Saints.

The very popular 'Value It! Flog It?' and the Riby Ramble four mile walk also return to Riby, St Edmund.

Normanby le Wold, St Peter, would like your help completing jigsaws for all ages at their jigsaw festival.

Claxby, St Mary will be launching a new trail leaflet to guide you around a series of local churches.

Listen to the tunes of Joshua Gibbons, a papermaker, and learn about papermaking 200 years ago at Tealby, All Saints.

See the original 18th century Tyrwhitt tapestries at Stainfield, St Andrew a beautiful Queen Anne church.

Listen to an engaging talk on the history behind the divine Southrey, St John the Divine.

Highlights for the second weekend 16th - 17th May

Explore the open towers of Kirton in Lindsey, St Andrew, and Scotter, St Peter during the second weekend.

Consider a pilgrimage to Hibaldstow, St Hybald the resting place of the 7th century Anglo-Saxon saint.

Discover the Crowle Stone in Crowle, St Oswald.

Visit the Minster Church of St Mary, Stow for a stunning blend of Saxon and Norman architecture.

In Coates by Stow, St Edith, take a seat in the pews and admire the rood screen and loft Henry's men overlooked. Later look for the stairs to nowhere in other churches.

Don't miss the recently restored 17th century Monson Monument at South Carlton, St John the Baptist.

Finally, appreciate the beautiful Victorian Gothic Hackthorn, St Michael & All Angels, featuring exquisite woodwork and set in tranquil parkland.

Reviews: in their own words festival visitors share their experiences of the event

Liz from York says the welcome from volunteers really adds to her experience: "My daughter and I love the West Lindsey Churches Festival and keenly anticipate it each year. This is the third year we'll have been. We live in York, and are staying for the weekend, so that we can see as many churches as possible. We've seen a variety of fascinating churches, many with long and intriguing histories and of great beauty in their landscapes. We've also met so many kind, friendly, interesting and hard-working parishioners welcoming us to their churches with chat, cake, and music. They add enormously to the pleasure we get from the weekend."

Alice, from Belper, Derbyshire, is a long-time visitor: "We have been enjoying the festival for over 20 years and never fail to see and learn something new. The volunteers are so lovely and the tea and cakes are wonderful."

Beth Sliwinski from Sheffield explains why she travels to the event from Yorkshire: "If ever a reason is needed to visit beautiful Lincolnshire, this is it. Every church provides its own treats - interesting architecture, friendly volunteers, delicious refreshments, picturesque churchyards - even the drives from one church to the next are a pleasure."

Long-time visitor Lexie Brookes-Ashmore, from Caistor, says she enjoys the graveyards as well as the churches: "I have been visiting the churches festival since 2012, so this will be my 12th year! My best friend and I cancel all other plans for the festival (plus the September one) and always end the day with a picnic. We love the architecture and history as well as the many interesting graves."

Gillian Poucher (Wolds based author and URC minister) wrote: "May Churches Festival celebrates the rich variety of churches across our district, from ancient to modern, peaceful to vibrant, in hamlets, villages and market towns. The Festival offers something for everyone: opportunities for reflection in the Quiet Churches, enjoyment of organ and other music, fascinating heritage displays, and of course many cups of tea and mouth-watering cakes!

Visitor Patrick Flynn explained how the opportunity to play many of the church organs was a highlight for him and his friend: "We travel from Hull and visit on one of the days each weekend. My friend is a professional organist and usually plays all the available instruments and we plan our route beforehand. We enjoy the festival very much indeed."

Sheffield visitor Cath Mirfin offered her recommendation to people considering taking part this year: "Whether you love visiting a new church, finding out about the building's history or just admiring the architecture, this is the festival for you. Everyone we met was very friendly and full of interesting info. And some churches have fabulous cakes! We put it in our diary every year and make it a long weekend on the East coast."

Visitor Angela Mayne from Middle Rasen explains her reasons for taking part: "I love taking pictures in Churches, so during the festival makes my job a lot more interesting. People looking round the displays in the Churches makes for good photography."

Chris Gale, also from Sheffield, combines visiting her brother Andy (who lives in Lincolnshire) with church visits. "We always take time to visit the church festivals, last year we took the family's Sealyham terrier Arthur who really enjoyed it, especially the ham sandwiches at Stainfield. This is an unusual Queen Anne-style church next to the Manor House in a tiny village that you would never know was there! The festival helps you discover some hidden gems in Lincolnshire."

Lincoln based Tracey Kidner explains how much the event means to her. "Always a highlight of my year: such a delight to explore our beautiful county and discover our shared history and heritage. Plus amazing cakes!"

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Links: Website, Brochure PDF & Social Media

The festival website: <https://www.churchesfestival.info/>

Link to an online PDF of the 2026 brochure

https://drive.google.com/file/d/17OyH03civ_BQX_z7_Quq8ppbyn4exPzd/view

Links to the festival's accounts in social media

<https://www.facebook.com/WestLindseyChurches>

<https://www.instagram.com/churches.festival/>

Photographs

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Notes to Editors

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