



Review: Waltham Museum of Rural Life

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Around 10 minutes from Cleethorpes on the East coast of England, a corrugated iron roofed Nissen hut houses the Museum of Rural Life, on the Waltham Windmill tourist site in the village of Waltham. The Museum was opened on 10 July 1988 by a Squadron Leader from RAF Binbrook. This hut was the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) mess during the war, part of RAF Grimsby at that time. The museum showcases the story of local rural and domestic life of the past.

All on one level, the museum consists of several rooms, filled floor to ceiling with themed objects and displays. As you enter and head to the left, you can see a large agricultural display with strong links to farming, rural trades, and crafts of a century ago. From an early post war Fordson tractor to handheld tools used by local trades people like farriers, clog makers and vets. Moving forward you will find yourself in a cobbler's work area. Many of the exhibits are from the 1930s and 1940s. There is a parlour and kitchen set out from the turn of the century. The range and oven dominate the room, whilst kitchen cabinets contain examples of food and drink from the past. The laundry has a full range of washing equipment including mangles and bars of soap. Further along

you will see a dining room, with piano and bibles, an office complete with typewriters and copying machines, and a gentleman's study. Each space is full of curiosities that visitors are encouraged to handle, from old newspapers to wind up gramophones.

Also housed in the hut is the RAF Grimsby Exhibition. During WWII the local airfield, known as RAF Grimsby, was home to Wellingtons No. 142 Squadron and then Lancasters of No. 100 Squadron and finally No. 550 Squadron. The exhibition in the museum contains hundreds of items of memorabilia relating to the RAF and WWII, from medals and uniforms to gas masks, a local siren and ration books. You will find some interpretation and informative volunteers were at hand to answer any questions. The number of objects on display in a small area is outstanding. Free to browse at leisure, this museum is a little gem that gives a fascinating glimpse into the past. This is a welcoming family-oriented museum.

Other facilities on the site include a working windmill, bookshop, gallery, miniature train, children's park and play area plus toilets and changing facilities. The car parking is free of charge and the site also has cycle stands. You can finish your visit in the lovely tearoom or with an ice cream from a train carriage café. Highly recommended.

The museum has a seasonal opening from late March until the end of September 2023, 11.00 am to 4.00 pm. Admission is free, but donations are welcomed.