

Sleaford Navigation Trust



Autumn 2025

The Sleaford Navigation Trust: -

... is a non-profit distributing company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales (No. 3294818)

...has a Registered Office c/o The Inland Waterways Association, Unit 16B, Chiltern Court, Asheridge Road, Chesham HP5 2PX.

...is registered as a Charity (No. 1060234)

...has a website: www.sleafordnavigation.co.uk

...is on facebook: Sleaford Navigation Trust

...is on X (Twitter): @SleafordNavigationTrust

Aims & Objectives

The Trust aims to stimulate public interest and appreciation of the history, structure and beauty of the waterway known as the Slea, or the Sleaford Navigation. It aims to restore, improve, maintain and conserve the waterway in order to make it fully navigable. Furthermore it means to restore associated buildings and structures and to promote the use of the Sleaford Navigation by all appropriate kinds of waterborne traffic. In addition it wishes to promote the use of towpaths and adjoining footpaths for recreational activities.

Newsletters

To request an email version or contribute articles or photographs please contact:

editor@sleafordnavigation.co.uk

9 Forum Way,
Sleaford NG34 7FF



Articles and opinions in this newsletter are those of the authors concerned and do not necessarily reflect SNT policy or the opinion of the editor

Our thanks to Westgate Print of Sleaford for their help with printing

Editorial

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter!

Since our last newsletter we've seen progress (some) and frustration (rather more than we needed) in our projects but still have plenty to report in this newsletter.

Our AGM in May was well attended and our speaker, Mark Bamford, provided an entertaining insight into the history of the Bass Maltings, undoubtedly one of Sleaford's amazing landmarks. We attended RiverLight Festival in June, Heckington Show in July and the Classic Car & Motorcycle Show in September. The next big thing will be Sleaford Christmas Market on 30th November... hope to see you there!

Debbie Scott, Editor

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Photos by the editor unless other wise stated.

Signing up to receive this newsletter by email means that you would receive it in full colour and the photographs work much better that way. Active hyperlinks will also take you directly to more information. Contact editor@sleafordnavigation.co.uk

Fishing on the Slea?

We are regularly asked whether people can fish on the river.

Most people are aware that a fishing licence is required but there is less knowledge about needing the permission of the owners.

We can only talk in terms of the stretch of river that is owned by the Trust, between Eastgate Green and the A17. Other sections are owned by other bodies that may take a different approach,.

The top pound is home to several species of fish, including the trout which have been re-stocked over the years. The trout in particular are wonderful to see and we would hate any harm to come to them.

It is therefore the Trust's policy to forbid fishing between Eastgate Green and Cogglesford, regardless of whether the 'angler' holds a licence. We are supported by the Environment Agency and Lincolnshire Police .

In the past we have found stray lengths of fishing line, complete with hooks, which can be hazardous to wildlife and people, in itself a valid case for enforcing our 'no fishing' policy.

Below Cogglesford, we have an agreement with the Grantham Angling Association Fly Fishing Section to allow their members alone to fly-fish on that stretch when the water levels and conditions are right.

Magnet fishing is a different kettle...

We are delighted to welcome New Members:

Tim Taylor

Adrian & Louise Keitch

Andrew Page

David and Judith Massey

RiverLight 2025



The Sleaford RiverLight festival, held over two weekends in June this year was a wonderful opportunity to talk to visitors and give them a glimpse of Benjamin Handley's fit out to date. Cllr Richard Wright, Leader of North

Kesteven District Council, was one visitor who took the chance to take the tiller and imagine cruising the top pound. Entertainment at the event was, as usual, absolutely amazing and more images can be found on the festival website hub-sleaford.org.uk/riverlight



We also did live magnet fishing with volunteer Jerry retrieving a child's scooter, abandoned in the river, as well as other items that had found their way to where they should not have been.

Heckington Show 2025



Ready to welcome visitors to our stand, volunteers Sheila and David had lots of interesting conversations and managed to recruit a couple of new members over the weekend



Sleaford Classic Car and Motorcycle Show 2025



The Trust's gazebo and display boards were pressed into duty again at the Car Show, held on Boston Road, Sleaford, in September. Lots of interesting conversations and another new member!



Photos thanks to www.sccms.co.uk/gallery

In response to a previous contributor's notes on why they became involved in our Trust, Bill Hunt, co-founder of the Sleaford Navigation Society, has kindly shared his recollections which we are delighted to share with you.

How I became involved in the Sleaford Navigation part 1 by Bill Hunt

It is generally believed that the Sleaford Navigation Society originated at a public meeting at Sleaford Methodist Hall, Northgate, Sleaford, held on Friday, 23 September 1977. That meeting witnessed the formal formation of the society yet its origins for me were much earlier,



tracible back to events that occurred over a decade earlier, although the significance of these events was not apparent at the time. There were a number of occasions in the following narrative when the process could have come to a full-stop and no society would have come about when it did. It was due to a number of serendipitous outcomes to situations that took the story forward, leading eventually to the society being formed.

Society gets off to a great start

SLEAFORD Navigation Society's maiden voyage was a huge success when 45 people crowded into the Methodist Hall for the group's launching.

"It was a terrific response, and I'm absolutely delighted. People came from Boston, Newark and Lincoln, in addition to those from Sleaford," said organiser Mr. Martin Chapman, who presided on Friday.

He began the meeting by explaining the goals of the group which are:

- to study the water situation in the Sleaford Navigation;

- to examine and hopefully improve the state of the footpaths along the river;

- to examine and perhaps improve the state of the river buildings, including Navigational Wharf and other listed buildings such as Navigation Office;

- to study the possibilities of eventual restoration of all or part of Sleaford Navigation by establishing that there is sufficient water supplies and restoring all or some of the seven locks.

"At one time, the Slea was a river which was turned into a navigation with the use of locks. Now, it has gone back

to being a river, and at the moment, nobody uses the river for anything," said Mr. Chapman.

He added that it could be a "great amenity asset" with improved boating, fishing and walking facilities.

Slides of various features and problems of the river were shown at the meeting.

A steering committee of eight members was chosen on Friday to devise a constitution and to set up the aims of the group.

Much of the group's work will be done by the steering committee, and public meetings will be held every month or two, added Mr. Chapman.

Membership costs £1 per person and £1.50 for a married couple. Thirty-three people joined on Friday.



Whilst these events were taking place, I did not keep contemporary notes or a diary, not knowing that I would need to recall the details half a century later. Therefore, what I have written here is as fair and balanced an account as I can remember. Please bear in mind that it is written from my personal viewpoint and I have striven not to be an unreliable witness.

Looking back, I can trace the beginning of my involvement with Sleaford and the River Slea/Kyme Eau (although I did not know it then) to when I left school in London in 1962. I did not want to go to university but went into banking, with the, then, Midland Bank, at a large branch in Queen Victoria Street, near to the Houses of Parliament in central London. With more than 50 members of staff working there, and me being the 'new boy', I was given lowly, non-banking, jobs to do that the more senior members of staff did not want, such as dealing with the post and a debit and credit management process called the 'waste'. After almost a year doing this, acute boredom set in and I began to look for a change of occupation. Banking was definitely not for me !

I had always been interested in Geography and History and the attraction of these subjects grew stronger with every passing stamp I had to stick on the bank's clients' correspondence. Teaching seemed an option and so I explored the possibility of undertaking a full-time course at one of two institutions in London; St. Mark and St. John College of Education in Chelsea to study for a teaching qualification (a Cert. Ed.) in Geography and the other, the University of London, to study for a bachelor's degree in the same subject.

It was in April 1964 when I made these two enquiries and, quite quickly, received replies from both. On the positive side, I was informed that I was qualified to be accepted on either course but there was a problem with the waiting time from then until I could begin. The college of education had a place for me to start in the new academic year, that is September, just five months away but

London University did not have any places available until the start of the next academic year but one, that is, September 1965, which would mean remaining in the bank for another year and a half. I decided to take the college of education offer and handed in my resignation letter to my bank manager and, after the appropriate notice period, I regained my freedom. Fortunately, my late brother-in-law was deputy catering manager (human division) at London Zoo (Regents Park) and he obtained temporary employment for me there behind the bars (again, human division!)

I remained at London Zoo until I began my teacher training course



An historic occasion . . . the first public meeting of the Sleaford Navigation Society, held on Friday at the Black Bull, Sleaford.

Bill Hunt and Martin Chapman both standing, far left and sixth from left respectively.

in September 1964 and in 1967, I was awarded the Cert. Ed. In 1964, but after I had begun my Cert.Ed. course, the teaching

profession introduced a new qualification following the recommendations of the Robbins Report – the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree. Students in my cohort were not permitted to transfer from the certificate course to the degree even though the two groups were largely taught by the same tutors and attended joint lectures. As time progressed the inability to obtain a degree became rather irksome and I regretted my choice of institution and wondered whether I should have waited and taken the London University offer instead.

My first educational position was teaching Geography at a secondary school in Camberley, Surrey. I married Caroline, also a teacher (in Art), in 1968 and we bought a flat in Addlestone in the same county. Four years later, in 1972, we were expecting the first of our three children and we became aware that our flat might soon be too small so we looked to move. Property prices had risen considerably since we had settled there and we decided to move away from the crowded south of England to a more rural area. Caroline's parents and wider family lived in North Yorkshire while mine were in Basingstoke, Hampshire. We began looking for a house in an area between the two and, by chance, we chose a bungalow in Leasingham, just outside Sleaford, as I had secured a teaching position at Boston College of Further Education teaching Geography and History to 'O' and 'A' level.

However, by 1969, soon after I began teaching, it became clear to me that further progression in secondary education would require a degree rather than a teaching certificate. I could not afford to go back to college to study for a degree full-time so a part-time course was the only option available. The Open University gained its Royal Charter in that year but was an unknown entity as far as the value of its degree qualifications was concerned so I did not make an application to enrol. This left a limited range of alternative courses of action. Eventually, I decided to embark on part-time study with Wolsey Hall Correspondence College which would lead

to an external London University degree in Geography.

I had obtained three 'A' levels when I was at school, in Geography; Economic History, and British Constitution. These three qualifications meant that, according to London University external degree regulation, I could apply only to study for a B.Sc. (Econ) degree. I began the correspondence course in 1969 and took the Part One examination in the cavernous hall at the Alexandra Palace in London a year later. In 1972, whilst now living at Leasingham, I took Part Two exams at the Albert Hall in Nottingham and was awarded the degree in August 1973. However, it was a 'General' degree, not an 'Honours' degree, the primary reason being that London University did not offer part-time students' supervision of a final year (3rd year) dissertation. Thus, no dissertation = no honours degree.

Our grateful thanks to Bill. Watch out for Part 2 in the next newsletter!!

If anyone else would like to share their memories of how they became involved with boating on the inland waterways and in particular with Sleaford Navigation Trust, please do get in touch.

Where are we now with the Trip Boat?

At the Trust we are very aware that there have not been updates recently on progress with the Trip Boat Project. We are sorry about this, particularly as so many people have expressed their support for the idea while others have asked about volunteering opportunities linked to it.

In preparation for the boat being able to travel on the river from The Hub to Cogglesford Watermill, we had discussed with the Environment Agency the permits needed for the removal of excess silt in the channel. Once the boat was able to move freely in the water we knew that its passage to and fro would help prevent a build-up of silt recurring. Before carrying passengers, we planned to train potential crew on the river so that they could become accredited skippers, a necessary requirement for operation of the boat. Contractors removed excess reeds in order to facilitate boat movement. At no point did we have any indication from local Environment Agency staff, with whom we have worked successfully for many years, that there would be any problem in getting the necessary permits. Some reservation was expressed, however, about the timing of work so that it did not coincide with fish spawning.

Unfortunately, when we, as riparian owners of this stretch of waterway, applied for permission, under an exemption, to remove excess silt, it was refused. Applications now have to be made nationally rather than locally and we were informed that the location of the proposed work was near “an environmentally sensitive area” which meant it could not go ahead. On enquiry, we were told this area was Lollycocks Field.

This refusal means that we have to apply for a bespoke permit, a far more complex and lengthy process. We are now in the process of doing this and checking what additional studies and mitigation will be required. Sadly, this means that we are not able to give any

indication as to when we will be able to undertake the clearance and thus be able to move the boat.

Work Parties continue though:

In October there was a great turn-out with strimmers and polesaws in use to tackle some overhanging branches and overgrown banks around the top pound.



Looking forward to getting the reeds under control...



Photo by Steve Hayes

Work on the boat fit-out also continues and now that the interior is fully lined the time has come for the intricate work around the windows and doors.

Steve and Jerry are rightfully proud of the trim around the windows!



Tales from the network...

Our family holiday this year took us to Anglesey, leaving no opportunity for an extended boat trip and to be fair, the problems caused by the lack of rain this summer meant our choices were limited anyway. We did manage a 3 night trip though on the Trent & Mersey on NB Maria from the Canal Cruising Company based at Stone. The boat was well fitted out and perfect for our needs. Inside the boat there was a plaque commemorating the [Trent and Mersey Canal Society](#) proudly displayed. TAMCS was, like our own society, formed in the 1970s originally with a single mission. Theirs was to re-open Harecastle Tunnel as ours was to save Navigation House.

The [Canal Cruising Company](#) was one of the first boatyards to offer hire boats to holiday-makers starting in January 1948. We were told by another friend and customer of theirs that it was only relatively recently that they dropped the instructions from the boat manuals on what to do in the event of coming across a horse-drawn boat!



While we were moored up in Stone on our last evening we spotted a sign on the towpath... Share with Care.



What a wonderfully civilised way of behaving; towpaths can be for everyone if everyone respects everyone else.

Then and now photos

Having spotted a photo from Great Haywood in one of Pat's old Waterways World magazines, dated July 1973, and knowing that we would be heading that way, I vowed to get a photograph to show how the scene looks now. The bridge at the junction with

The Staffs and Worcs Canal is clearly visible in both shots and I think the building just before the bridge is the same. Unfortunately we weren't able to recreate the school orchestra!



Great Haywood - A social orchestra playing on the top of a converted narrowboat was one of the many attractions at the Staffs. & Worcs. Society's Rally held at Great Haywood over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend. A record number of boats attended the rally which saw the choir perform to be organised by the Society. Over 200 craft assembled for the three day event.

Both photographs were taken from the road bridge (Bridge 74) which leads into Great Haywood village, passing the



fabulous farm shop just to the east of the canal.

If you have any 'then and now' waterway views you would like to share, please get in touch.

Debbie Scott, Editor

Presentations about the Sleaford Navigation

As some of you will be aware, Steve and I do a double act in giving talks to local groups about the history of the Sleaford Navigation, the formation of the original Society and subsequent restoration of the waterway together with recent and current projects. We seem to have been in high demand this year and have visited the Sleaford Museum Group, Sleaford Ladies' Probus, Sutton-on-Trent Local History Group and the Old Sleaford Heritage Group.

Although, basically, the information we are giving is the same to all groups, there has to be some modification, particularly if we are

not sure how well the audience knows the area around Sleaford. That was particularly relevant with the Sutton-on-Trent group. Similarly, there can be an assumption on our part that an audience will understand the need for the construction of locks to render a river navigable, in effect to create a navigation. When a concept is very familiar to you it's easy to forget that others may not have that knowledge. When in Sleaford we are often asked where the navigation goes to and a map of the Inland Waterways system can help clarify the myriad of destinations which are accessible from South Kyme.

Recently, our talks have included an explanation about the NKSPF grant and the trip boat project. It has been really gratifying to hear the support and encouragement given by the groups even when we have to explain some of the problems and frustration we have faced.

Our Powerpoint presentation illustrates the history and achievements of the Trust and is an integral part of the talk. That is when it works!! Sadly, at the Sleaford Ladies' Probus meeting this was not the case and after several failed attempts to load it on the computer I was forced to adlib and talk without the benefit of any images. Thank goodness the group had a detailed knowledge of Sleaford and I could refer to Navigation House, the crest over the door, the lift-bridge and slipway above Cogglesford Watermill and the Destination South Kyme project with the comfort that they knew what I was talking about. They were kind enough to say that they had found it all interesting and informative but it isn't an experience I want to repeat in a hurry!

In the history section we refer to Benjamin Handley, one of the driving forces behind the original Company of the Proprietors of the Sleaford Navigation, and explain why we chose to name the trip boat after him. He acted as Treasurer to the company for many years and was given a silver cup by the grateful shareholders when the navigation opened in 1794. That cup is now on display in

Navigation House. His position in society was such that he was able to persuade William Jessop, an engineer in high demand, to plan the river modifications. He also approached Sir Joseph Banks for support and this proved to be invaluable.

I'm afraid I can't resist the opportunity to tell a little story about Banks visiting Tahiti with Cook at this point in the presentation. Apparently, Banks became rather friendly with the Queen of Tahiti and visited her one night. Somehow he lost his trousers while there and was forced to return to the ship without them much to the amusement of the crew. I normally suggest that he was probably discussing local flora and fauna with the queen and perhaps having a cup of tea on a rather warm evening. This is usually well-received by the audience but I do sometimes wonder if it will occasion someone exclaiming, "Disgusting!" Thankfully, it hasn't happened so far.

Chris Hayes, Chair



RIVERSIDE GUARDIANS

Become a Riverside Guardian!

Navigation House

The Riverside Guardians of Navigation House are young member of the public who help clean up Sleaford and local areas, making a real impact to our community. Help us set a good example to others and learn about recycling and keeping our surroundings litter free. *Parental/Guardian supervision required. Check out our website for more information!

Benefits:

- Borrow litter picking equipment
- Help improve the environment.
- Build community pride
- Physical activity and getting outdoors
- Certificate of completion

Every 1st Sunday of the Month

10:00am - 14:00pm

Navigation House
Navigation Wharf, Castle
Street, Sleaford
NE24 1TW

01529 325904 www.hearofhcs.com @navigationhouse

Fundraising

Do you know how simple and easy fundraising for the Sleaford Navigation Trust can be?



NKDC runs a community lottery where 50p from every £1 ticket goes to a local good cause or charity of your choice.

The lottery is run every week on a Saturday evening where the top prize is a fantastic £25,000!!

So far this year, the lottery has brought in nearly £720 extra income for the Trust which is very much appreciated.

The link for joining up and being in with a chance of a prize whilst supporting the Trust is:

www.nklottery.co.uk/support/sleaford-navigation-trust

Thank you and good luck!!



Easy fundraising is exactly that! When shopping on any and many online shopping sites an automatic % donation of your total spend will be made to your nominated charity or cause, at no additional cost to you. Purchases such as insurance, holidays and cars are all included along with entertainment, eating out and all the well known shopping sites.

Your usual internet browser can be easily set up to alert you that a donation is available when you are on any of the brands sites that are part of Easy fundraising.

If you load the app onto your mobile phone or tablet and go to the retailer's site via the app the donation is activated for you.

The link for Easy Fundraising is www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/sleafordnt/?from404=1 or search in your app store to upload to your phone.

Useful websites:

Sleaford Navigation Trust	www.sleafordnavigation.co.uk
Navigation House	www.navigationhouse.co.uk
Cogglesford Watermill	www.cogglesfordwatermill.co.uk
TourismNK	www.heartoflincs.com
Sleaford Town Council	www.sleaford.gov.uk
North Kesteven District Council	www.n-kesteven.gov.uk
Lincolnshire County Council	www.lincolnshire.gov.uk
Inland Waterways Association	www.waterways.org.uk
Canal & River Trust	www.canalrivertrust.org.uk
Environment Agency	www.environment-agency.gov.uk
Blue Green Corridor	www.withamsleabluegreencorridor.co.uk
East Mercia Rivers Trust	www.eastmercia.org
Sleaford Museum	www.sleafordmuseum.org.uk
Sleaford & District Civic Trust	www.sleafordcivictrust.co.uk

Also follow us on facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Sleaford-Navigation-Trust-632143133547859>

And X (Twitter)

@SleafordNavigationTrust

The River Sleas Clean Up volunteers continue their work parties - for more details of the events please see their facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/river.slea/ with specific upcoming 'clean-ups' listed in their events page.

Membership Subscriptions - Action Required Please

A reminder please, that the subscriptions are now as follows.

**Individual (£10), Senior Citizen (£8), Under 18 (£8)
Family (£15), Life (£120), Corporate (£20 min)**

Please update your standing orders accordingly, if you haven't already done so. Many thanks to those who already have.

The membership application form with the latest information about subscriptions is also [available on our website](#) for potential members.

A selection of plaques is now available to order online through our website www.sleafordnavigation.co.uk

Places to Visit

Navigation House NG34 7TW

Opening Times: Friday to Monday 10.00 am to 2.00 pm.

Cogglesford Watermill NG34 7EQ

Opening Times: Friday to Monday 12.00 noon to 4.00 pm
and regular Milling Days on the second Sunday of each month

See www.heartoflincs.com for more details and up to date information on events, etc.

Sleaford Museum, Southgate NG34 7RQ

Monday 12.30 pm – 3.00 pm, Wednesday 10.00 am – 3.00 pm,
Friday 10.00 am – 12.30 pm, Saturday 10.00 am – 3.00 pm.

Committee Contacts

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Membership

Membership Secretary	Jenny Osborne, Bank House, Ruskington Fen, Billingham, Lincoln, LN4 4DS Tel: 01526 832256
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SNT Work Parties go on throughout the year, usually on the second Sunday of the month. Contact Mel Sowerby (01522 856810 or sowerbys@ntlworld.com) for details of upcoming dates

Sleaford Navigation Trust is a member of the Sleaford Sports Partnership (SSP)

All SNT members are automatically SSP members, and are welcome to join in any of the SSP events, which are all held at the David Williams Pavilion, Sleaford Rugby Club, East Road, Sleaford.

