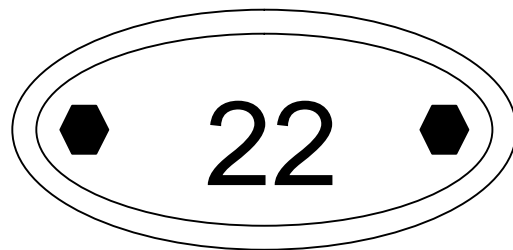
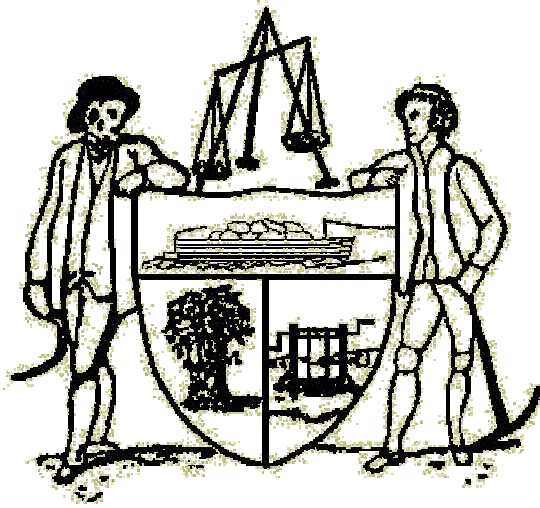


Sleaford Navigation Trust



July 2005

The Sleaford Navigation Trust

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

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... has a web page: www.sleafordnavigation.co.uk

Aims & Objectives of SNT

The Trust aims to stimulate public interest and appreciation of the history, structure and beauty of the waterway known as the Sleas, 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.

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.

Editorial

Welcome

Enjoy your reading and I look forward to meeting many of you at the AGM.

Nav house at agm

Letter from mick handford re token

Update on token

Lots of copy this month so some news carried over until next edition – tokens, nav house description

www.river-witham.co.uk

Martin Noble

Canoeists enjoying
a sunny trip along
the River Slea
below Cogglesford
in May

*Photo supplied by
Norman Osborne*



Chairman's Report for July 2005

Chris Hayes

The first highlight to report is the official opening of Navigation House on June 2nd. It was good to see Bill Hunt and Martin Chapman, history expert and chairman respectively of the original Sleaford Navigation Society, there to see the original dream of preservation realised.

The restoration is certainly impressive and the display inside well worth a visit. You can try your hand at a game to carry a cargo along the Sleas and deal with problems along the way or find out more about the people who were instrumental in the original Navigation development. I really can recommend it to visitors. At present the house is only open at the weekends but there are plans to extend the opening hours later in the summer. Look out for the cat, rats and mice in the clerk's office!

The summer meeting of Northern Canals Association was held at Louth on June 19th where one of the speakers was Mary Powell updating the audience on the progress of the LWP. These meetings provide a valuable forum for the exchange of news and ideas between canal groups and it was good to see so many people there.

As I write this, at the end of June, WRG are currently engaged in improving the footpath below Cogglesford Mill. As ever we are grateful to them for including us in their programme of works and for all their hard efforts. Help in the shape of funding from the Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership has also been very welcome. Without it the work would not have been able to take place. I hope that the finished path will increase the enjoyment of the area for visitors and certainly the ones who have seen what has been happening so far have expressed appreciation.

It's good to be able to welcome familiar faces back in the WRG team and to see Nina and Izzy back as leaders. It was also good to welcome back old T-shirts as a Cobblers shirt was being sported by one party member!

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Thanks are certainly due too to the Trust members who have been closely involved in the preparation for the camp. Norman Osborne, as ever has been the vital link with the Rugby Club and Dave Pullen has spent a great deal of time organising plant and materials. I think it fair to say that he knows a lot more about footpaths than he did before!

At times like this I am very conscious of all the work that Committee members and others do behind the scenes and of the many hours of their time they give to furthering the cause of the Trust. My report only gives a brief indication of the things that have happened. The rest of the magazine helps to complete the picture but, as with all volunteer organisations, it's the work of many that keeps everything going and not all tasks are as visible as others.

Thank you again.

Chris Hayes.



Many thanks to Debbie Scott for the above photo which she says *“was intended to be a general crowd scene at the recent Navigation House Opening Ceremony but unbeknownst to me at the time, I seem to have stumbled across an SNT research project into the design, construction and operation of the umbrella!”*

I'm sure our Chairman & Secretary have a perfectly reasonable excuse!!

River Witham and the Navigable Drains.

By
David Carnell

On a bright sunny Thursday afternoon n.b. Scrimmager left the Brayford Pool, Lincoln heading for the Witham Navigable Drains at Boston. Travelling along this wide, deep river we met only one other crewed narrow boat on the moorings at Washingborough.

11km from Lincoln we arrived at the new pontoon moorings at Fiskerton. These have been installed to enable boaters to visit a wetlands nature reserve being created following the removal of some 200,000 tons of clay to build up the flood banks along the Witham towards Bardney. Both are part of the Lincolnshire Partnership Project. During the evening we observed a variety of wildlife, mainly water birds with their offspring. A barn owl, patrolling its territory in search of supper, momentarily came to rest some 20 yards from us!

Friday started fine and sunny, at Bardney Lock we moored to allow a B.W. tug and pan to work through the lock. The pan contained old pontoons that had been replaced at Chapel Hill mooring, the entrance to Kyme Eau and the Sleaford Navigation. A short time later we met a B.W. crane boat was making its way back to the Lincoln Depot. By the time we reached Anton's Gowt, the entrance to the Witham Navigable Drains we had only seen three other powered boats and one small wooden cabin boat under sail. By now the temperature had reached 23 degrees, we decided to walk into Boston via the multi-user path which forms part of the Lincoln to Boston Water-Rail Way, being developed by the Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership. A 2 mile walk; thoroughly recommended but not while the temperatures are extreme! Boats arriving from the Continent through Boston's Grand Sluice are met by a B.W. lock-keeper at the new "Gateway" to Lincolnshire facilities. Visitor moorings at Boston are ample for G.R.P. cruisers, there only being three moorings suitable for narrow boats.

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Returning to the boat we decided to moor for the night on the piled moorings at Anton's Gowt Lock and availed ourselves of a meal at the nearby "Malcolm Arms" Inn.

Saturday emerged sunny but very blustery. Anticipating the arrival of other boats we checked out the little used lock to ensure that everything was in good working order and left the head gates open to allow arriving craft to enter having noted that the water depth gauge was 4" above 0, giving ample water but with the equivalent reduction in headroom. The boats having locked through travelled along the Frith Bank Drain to Cowbridge Lock where we were met by two helpful and enthusiastic "gongoozlers" who assisted the boats through this unusual lock. The boats then travelled into the centre of Boston on the picturesque Maud Foster Drain under the A52 road bridge to find sufficient room to wind and return to the Packet Boat steps to moor. The steps on the east side are to be fitted with safety hand-rails and lockable gate that can be opened by a B.W. water-mate key providing easy access to Boston's market place and shopping centre.

Leaving Boston we headed along Stonebridge Drain and finding a sunny sheltered spot enjoyed an evening B.B.Q. On Sunday we continued along the Drain to a winding point at the junction of East Fen and West Fen Catchwater Drains to the interest of local residents and motorists. Returning to Cowbridge Lock around lunchtime and continuing along Medlam Drain, we passed a water hens nest with a solitary egg in it. Continuing to New Bolingbrook Drain we turned and were able to view the Carrington Steam and Vintage Tractor Rally. On our journey back to the junction with West Fen Drain we were amazed to see that the water hens egg had hatched. Having travelled along West Fen Drain and into Newham Drain we reached Anton's Gowt Lock where we moored for the evening before setting off for the return to Lincoln on the Monday morning. N.b. "Puffin" from Copt Heath intended stopping off at Kyme Eau, entry to the Sleaford Navigation before continuing up the River Witham.

With the recent concerns of congestion and undue delays at some of the honey-pot sites of the waterways we would suggest that boaters consider visiting these quiet and peaceful waters that are to become a route connecting the Fenland link project.

David Carnell

History of Lincolnshire Waterways

If your interest in Lincolnshire's waterways stretches beyond the banks of the Slea then you might enjoy the series of articles that were published in the Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society.

The series was written by Pat Jones and looked at a number of local waterways. His articles included "*The ever confusing Horncastle Canal*" (No 185, July 2003); "*The New River Ancholme*" (No 187, March 2004) and "*From Castle Moat to Navigation – the origins and evolution of the Tattershall Canal*" (No 189, July 2004).

The Railway & Canal Historical Society (RCHS) may be contacted either through their website at www.bodley.oc.ac.uk/external/rchs/index.html if you have access to the Internet or by writing to their Hon. Secretary, Matthew Searle, at the Society's registered address: 3 West Court, West Street, Oxford, OX1 3QP.

Martin Noble

Ancient Fishing Rights

The "Lincoln, Rutland & Stamford Mercury" carried a report about a dispute over fishing rights in the River Slea at Sleaford..... however as this was over 100 years ago I have few other details!! Good to see that even then the Slea was hitting the headlines!

Those of you interested might like to refer to the edition published on 29th May 1891. Copies of this wonderful old newspaper are available on microfilm at Boston, Grantham, Sleaford, Stamford and Lincoln Central Libraries! The article appears on page 6, column 2 according to the Lincolnshire Archives website.

Martin Noble

Sleaford Water Weekend 13th & 14th August 2005

by
Debbie Scott

The 2005 Sleaford Water Weekend is lining up to be another exciting event for the weekend of 13th & 14th August. Several new sponsors have already come 'on board' for this year. Darren and Pam Newton of Mortgageforce and Mr Nadim Aziz and Mr Habib Choudhury of the India Garden Restaurant in the Market Place are amongst the first of the local businesses to support the event financially

There will be music and entertainment, food and drink, stalls (including our own SNT Pat and friends), indoor crafts and the Saturday Car Boot Sale as usual. This year, for the first time in ages, we are looking out for teams of 6 people to enter the spectacular 'It's a Knock Out' – how about an SNT team? Please call Don Woods on 07903 486015.

We've canoes, three duck races and of course the famous Sleaford Raft Races making up the wetter splashy bits of the weekend. Entry forms for the raft race are available from Sleaford Tourist Information Centre or Pizza Pit in Money's Yard.

Activities in the Nettles and Lollycocks are being arranged by ArtsNK and CountrysideNK – look out for Bug-hunts and hay-mazing activities in strange spaces! Other Leisure Connection venues, including Northgate Sports Hall and Sleaford Leisure Centre, will also be joining in with the spirit of the weekend and of course there will be exhibitions and activities in the Hub.

More information about times and activities will be available as the weekend approaches, but in the meantime put the Water Weekend in your diary for the 13th & 14th August and start designing those rafts!

Snippet

Dave Turner reports that the regional development agency known as 'Advantage West Midlands' have at long last approved funding for the Droitwich canals restorations which will presumably now go ahead in the near future. Let us hope that we can also publish similarly good news in the near future!!

David Pullen Honorary Engineer

I can trace my love of water and the waterways back to my childhood on a farm in West Sussex. The farm surrounded a 30 acre lake and my father was responsible for controlling the water level through some massive flood gates. It was constructed for water power about 1750 so was probably built by the same “navvies” that worked on the canals. The house was surrounded by mills streams with the constant sound of running water. As a child I swam in and fished the lake and walked for hours around it, quite simply it was my haven. Later I canoed and rowed on the lake. No surprise then that ever since water and waterways have given me such rewarding times. For me water always reflects the moods of the seasons and the weather and I always feel relaxed and comfortable near water.

At school I chose to do canoeing for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. We built a canoe, had basic training with the BCU (including capsizing drill!.....), and finally did an unsupervised expedition by canoe. Three of us canoed down the Sussex River Adur out onto the sea at Shoreham along the coast to Littlehampton and then up the River Arun to Stopham. It was a fantastic trip including camping in the sand dunes near Climping and outside the Black Rabbit Inn near Arundel. I cringe now at the lack of planning and supervision we had on that wholly tidal trip. I really should be in the Wey & Arun Canal Trust as well as the Sleat!

I took up Agricultural Engineering as a profession and this included significant land drainage and hydraulics so my interest in water was maintained. I now work as an independent consultant in this field and along the way I have also managed to include consultancy work for British Waterways in my portfolio.

Yvonne and I started boating with our 2 children in 1985 on a Black Prince hire boat on the Oxford Canal. Of course I was instantly hooked as it bought back all my early memories. After a further hiring holiday we got our first boat in 1988 and built our present one from 1993-96.

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What really fascinates me about the waterway network is the fantastic pioneering work that the early canal engineers did. All of the fantastic surveying and mapping technology, and advanced construction techniques that we have today would still have given us more or less the same waterway network that the likes of Jessop designed over 200 years ago. I am a particular fan of William Jessop and the considerable impact his surveying and engineering had on so many canals and rivers at the height of “canal mania”. I also love the industrial archaeology of the canals, and I can often be heard to eulogise over particularly fine bridges and other well designed and built waterway structures and buildings!

Working on the Slea is one of my hobbies, and despite the frustrations mainly associated with funding and other issues I am sure that one day it will be fully open to Sleaford. Unfortunately we have still to convince a lot of local people that the Slea is a very easy restoration compared with many previous and current waterway restorations in other parts of the country.

Dave Pullen



The Environment Agency has a long term programme for improved flood defences on the Lower Witham and it's tributaries including the River Slea (Kyme Eau in EA parlance!). The photograph shows current work upstream of Kyme Bottom Lock on the south bank. The contractors May Gurney are raising and strengthening the bank with imported clay. Navigation has not been affected.

Photo supplied by Norman Osborne

Froginabox
or
Tales from the May Work Party!
by
Dave Turner

Yes 'FROGINABOX' was the strange label on what at first site I took to be someone's lunch box hidden away under a partially dislodged coping stone alongside the by-wash at Cobbler's Lock. Dave Pullen had asked me to clean up and replace the bricks on a section of wall near to where a tree had been removed some time ago. Until the vegetation was cut back it appeared that just the one coping stone required attention having been rolled back from the wall, but closer inspection led to the discovery that its next door neighbour was glued down with nothing more than gravity and underneath was the box.

Also on the lid was an assurance that the contents of the box were totally harmless and a web address. Inside was a pencil and notebook with instructions for logging all discoveries both intentional and accidental along with a selection of everyday objects - but no sign of a frog! As it was doing no harm and would not be in our way for some weeks we included a couple of Trust membership forms and put the whole lot back where we found it! Back home I investigated the web site www.geocaching.com and learned a bit more about this previously unknown hobby. It appears to be an American 'sport' with the chance to win a brand new Jeep thrown in. The following is from the web site:

(Geocaching is) to take advantage of the wonderful features and capability of a GPS unit. The basic idea is to have individuals and

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organisations set up caches all over the world and share the locations of these caches on the internet. Geocaching is an entertaining adventure game for GPS users. Participating in a cache hunt is a good way GPS users can then use the location co-ordinates to find the caches. Once found, a cache may provide the visitor with a wide variety of rewards. All the visitor is asked to do is if they get something they should try to leave something for the cache.

A GPS unit is an electronic device that can determine your approximate location (within around 6-20 feet) on the planet. Co-ordinates are normally given in Longitude and Latitude. You can use the unit to navigate from your current location to another location. Some units have their own maps, built-in electronic compasses, voice navigation, depending on the complexity of the device.

GPS Units can range from \$100 to \$1000 depending on the kind of capabilities you are looking for. The author uses a Garmin eTrex , which runs for around \$100, and can get you to within 20 feet of any geocache (depending on the location). The next step is one with a built-in electronic compass, has topographic maps, more memory, etc.

Apparently there are tens of thousands of caches out there world wide waiting to be discovered. I wonder how many are on the English canal system?

Dave Turner

Navigation House Update

At long last the restoration of Navigation House has been completed with the official opening being attended by our Chairman and Secretary along with Martin Chapman as a guest of honour. It must have been a very emotional moment for Martin to see one of his dreams realised after all these years. I wonder how it felt to see one of the fruits of his labours come to a close (or rather an opening!)?

Work Party News

by
Mel Sowerby

Both the May and June work parties saw us at Cogglesford Mill in Sleaford working below the lock to build a wall and put in some steps for easier access to the river.

Norman Osborne took some photographs of canoeists in May who had come up the river from Haverholme and said how nice the river is. The sooner we finish the steps the more we can encourage use of this part of the river.

In between these work parties a trip was planned on the drains around Boston (see Dave C's article on p6) with a detour up the Slea to Bottom Lock to tidy up the lock area ready for the divers who came back in June (see Dave P's one p15!) to repair the gate and reopen the lock!

The June work party finished the steps at Cogglesford and started on the wall to be completed after the WRG week (27th June to 2nd July). A full account of the WRG activity will appear in the next edition but society members were on hand on the Sunday to organise the new pathway through the field and remove low branches to allow the digger to start work at the far end . By Monday evening 3 skips had been filled and 45 metres dug out ready for the 150mm of planings to go down once the timber gravel board are in place and the geotextile matting. Work did not finish until about 6.30 pm each day giving local members the opportunity to lend a hand for a couple of hours.

Editors Note: please don't forget that Mel is always on the look out for willing volunteers to lend a hand at work parties so please give him a call (his number is on the inside back cover) and have a chat about how YOU can help!! Everyone will have a different skill that they can offer so don't worry if you're not a handyman (sorry, handyperson) by nature, I'm sure he or John Jackson would be only too pleased to see you there.

Divers on the Slea
by
Dave Pullen

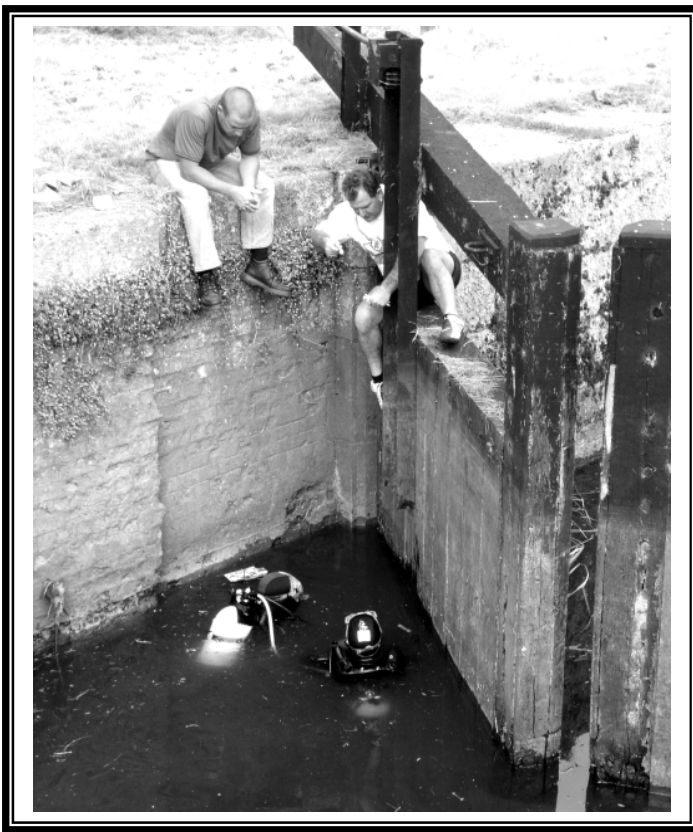
Divers from RAF Cottesmore Sub Aqua Club have again come to the rescue of SNT at Kyme Bottom Lock. Following repair work last year on one of the lock gates we have had to carry out a similar repair again in June this year. We can now expect the gates on this lock to require increasing maintenance as they are getting near to the end of their normal service life having been initially installed in the early 80's.

On this occasion we had a massive leak through the other gate and we feared the worst, i.e. was the whole gate about to fall apart? In March the divers did a quick dive to quantify the problem. The good news was that the main structure of the gate was still there and was not causing the leak. The problem was that the gate sluice paddle, that is raised to empty the lock, was completely missing! Also one of the steel plates that retain the paddle in the gate was lying in the gate recess together with the lifting rods.

The divers looked hard for the missing paddle, and as it measures about 2 ft by 3 ft one would think it would not be too hard to find! However it is completely missing and we presume it has been washed out right down the river, probably ending up at Boston or in The Wash!

In view of the difficulty of replacing the paddle underwater and the limited shelf life of the gates we decided to block up the paddle hole with 4 oak planks. The divers did this work for us on 9 June, and the lock and the Navigation are now open again.

Our thanks again to RAF Cottesmore Sub Aqua Club, and in particular John Brisley, Keith Ingram, Neil Dinwoodie and Trevor Charlton who did the work underwater in very murky water!



Divers from RAF Cottesmore Sub Aqua Club brave the waters at Bottom Lock to consider the repair of another broken paddle whilst Dave Pullen prepares the oak planking used to block up the hole left by the missing paddle.

Photos kindly supplied by Norman Osborne

Bad Hair Day for Our Favourite River

It has been a particularly bad year for weed-growth along many stretches of the Slea this year. Numerous complaints have been received by bodies connected with the waterway, including our own committee, about the state of the channel. The thick, vivid green, weed got so bad along the stretch from Cogglesford Mill upstream to Navigation Wharf that it was actually collecting rubbish and debris on the surface of the water. The water flow was unable to clear the build-up which reached its peak at the end of May, unfortunately by this time it was also holding a number of dead ducks, rats and fish – not a pleasant sight for anyone who lives in Sleaford and particularly off-putting for visitors who tend to remember such things for a long time. The Environment Agency started its clearance programme in June after the spawning and nesting season had drawn to a close and what a difference it has made! Back to its former glory and looking far more inviting once again!

Martin Noble

The Drought of 1976
(Another Trip Down Memory Lane)
By
Nigel Stennet-Cox

Anyone who was around and in this country in 1976 will probably remember the long hot summer of that year. By about July the tabloid headlines, ever intellectually challenging, had descended to single words like "Phew"!!

I can't quote any exact figures for temperatures or duration, but reckon there was no significant rain from about the end of April to early September. The previous year had also been exceptionally dry and hot, so the poor old Slea wasn't even very robust at the start of the 1976 onslaught.

Those even older, including myself, may remember that the level of the Slea, particularly upstream, but also downstream of Cogglesford Mill Lock, was consistent and reliable, with only slight seasonal variation, prior to the early Sixties. My recall is that just upstream, in the middle, the level was probably about one and a half to one and three-quarter metres. That is just where the stream divides for some water to go through the Mill and the rest through the lock. In those less ordered times young people would often swim and lark around in the river, and I remember lads standing in the middle with just their heads showing above the water. Downstream the deepest bits were not more than two or three feet, or less than a metre.

In the Sixties however, the level started to drop markedly in the summer, the lock seeing to it that the downstream bit was the first, and possibly the only bit to be seriously affected. This it was though, and by the late Sixties it had come to largely dry up every summer. Come the Seventies and local people were remarking on the low levels and virtually static flow in the summertime.

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The local paper too, started to frequently publish comments and the odd article, usually of a "hand wringing" nature, and regarding the "mystery" of the disappearing Slea. I don't recall any official bodies such as the Council or the River Authority saying anything except to join in the hypothesising about problems at the source in; is it Derbyshire?

In 1976 though, the town side of the river first became totally static and rancid, complete with its poor fish, before drying up completely in about June/July. There was then an overpowering smell of dead fish between the town and the Mill until the corpses rotted or were eaten by birds. This naturally focussed local interest and led to a two page article in The Sleaford Standard by an author whose name I forget, citing details, with dates, of licences to abstract water, granted to farmers and other parties upstream of Sleaford. There may have been downstream ones too, but there wasn't much left for them! Although quantities may have sometimes been specified it was impossible to police them, and doubtless, the less there was the more was wanted.

I had left the area by then and don't know what, if any, "fallout" there was, but the river recovered, was restocked with fish, and the mystery was no more!

Nigel Stennett-Cox

It's the Crown Court for Dead Fish!

Remember the tragedy that struck the Slea back in February 2003? The pollution of the water around Castle Moat that led to contamination of the Slea for much of its length and the death of more than 100,000 fish? Well it appears that, at long last, more details will become available as the case against the three accused has been referred to Lincoln Crown Court by Sleaford Magistrates. It will be heard on 6 July 05 (some 2 ½ years after the incident!!) so those Trust members who are not local to Sleaford will have to wait for the next edition of this newsletter to find out the verdict. Gallons of deadly toxin cypermerthin, a general pesticide used mainly on agricultural crops, were believed to be cause of the incident.

Your Executive Committee

Chairman	Chris Hayes 10 Chelmer Close, North Hykeham, Lincoln LN6 8TH Tel 01522 689460
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Ordinary Member	Barbara Jones Tel 01529 303749
Ordinary Member	Susan Sowerby Tel 01522 856810
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Sleaford Sports Partnership (SSP) Liaison	Norman Osborne Contact number as above
Work Party Organisers	John Jackson Tel 01529 410427 Mel Sowerby Tel 01522 856810

Dates for your diary...

The following activities are planned over the next few months so please make a note of them and endeavour to support your Trust in any way you can.

Sunday 10 th July SNT Work Party	Don't forget your sun-cream! Contact Mel Sowerby on 01522 856810 for further details.
Sunday 10 th July Craft Event @ Mill FoCM Event	He can go and play in the mud at the Work Party; she can go to the Mill and get crafty!! Demonstrations, workshops and refreshments from 11am to 4pm.
Sat/Sun 30 th /31 st July Heckington Show SNT Stall	A great day out for all the family with another airing of the SNT stall by Pat Taylor.
13 th & 14 th August Sleaford Water Weekend Known as "Splashy Bits" this year!!!!	Loads of activities planned on and around the waterway in Sleaford (let's hope the water stays in the river this year and doesn't fall from the sky!) Further details to follow in local press; also see Debbie's article elsewhere in this edition. Cogglesford Mill will be milling on both days and serving cream teas on Sunday.
Saturday 3 rd September Sleaford Historic Car Show SNT Stall	Or to give it its full and proper title 'The Sleaford Historic Car and Classic Motorcycle and Craft Weekend'!! Try remembering that little mouthful!! Always a fun day out with the opportunity to meet friends (and part with some money!) at the SNT stall.
10 th & 11 th September Lincolnshire Heritage Weekend FoCM & SNT Event	With a theme of 'Transport' this year SNT aim to join with FoCM for a joint venture. Come along and join in the fun!
Sunday 30 th October Halloween Event FoCM Event	Displays by the Lincoln Bat Group plus themed events and refreshments.

FoCM = Friends of Cogglesford Mill

SSP = Sleaford Sports Partnership

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

All Sleaford Navigation Trust Members are welcome to join in any of the SSP events, which are all held at the David Williams Pavilion, Sleaford Rugby Club, Ruskington Road, Sleaford. Further details may be obtained from Norman on 01526 832256, or Barbara on 01529 303749

