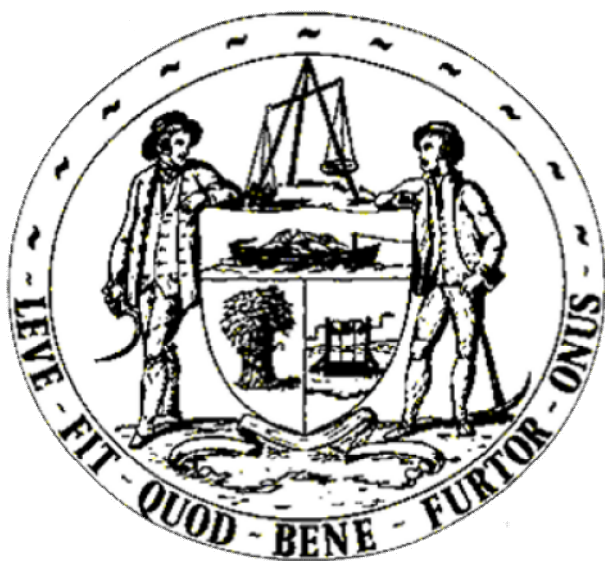


SLEAFORD NAVIGATION TRUST



28

Winter 2008

The Sleaford Navigation Trust: -

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

Aims & Objectives

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

Please send all articles to either: david.osborne1987@gmail.com or norman.osborne@farming.co.uk.

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

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Editorial

Thanks to those of you who have sent in articles to make possible the publication of this latest newsletter. If anyone else has articles or photos of interest for the newsletter, we would be very interested.

Articles need not be just of experiences on the Slea but could be of holiday experiences elsewhere, for example the article by Sue Sowerby about Ellie in this edition.

Perhaps some of you have photos of days gone by, or previous events on the Slea. An example is the photo of Haverholme Lock Boathouse, shown at the foot of this page, which has just been found.

At present the newsletter is produced when enough articles are submitted, so apologies for the time between editions.

David Osborne

An old photo of
Haverholme Lock
Boathouse

*Photo source
unknown*



Chairman's Report for Winter 2008

Chris Hayes

Happy New Year, if a little belatedly, to all our readers! It promises to be a busy and exciting year for the Trust because of all the proposed works that will have to be completed by the end of 2008. Funding opportunities are such that deadlines are vital.

I was thrilled to be able to report in the newsletter on the works to take place at Bottom Lock and am very grateful for the funding obtained through Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership that has made this possible.

Some of the preparatory work for the bridge has taken place and we await news on the fabrication. Recently members of the Trust have met with Sleaford Town Council to discuss the new slipway/winding hole and the plans for the surrounding landscaping. It is good to be able to work together for the benefit of the whole area development.

The Trust did not have a stand at Sleaford Christmas Market last year so I am sorry if people looked for us in vain. We did attend a Tastes of Lincolnshire Christmas Food Event at the showground however and were very pleased with the interest shown by visitors. I think we provided a diversion for those husbands whose curiosity was aroused by something other than food stalls! (A sexist comment I know! The food and craft stalls were excellent it has to be said!)

Thanks again are due to all those who give so generously of their time in support of our aims. I think this year will give us something to celebrate!

Welcome to our new members!

Welcome to our new members, Mrs Claire Wainscott and family.

Rodney Mills

Chris Hayes

I was saddened to hear in November of the death of Rodney Mills. Many of you would know him as a friend and supporter of the Trust and more specifically as Pat Taylor's very able assistant on the Sales stall. All those who knew him will miss his warmth, intelligence and humour. Rodney was a modest, unassuming man whose conversation occasionally gave tantalising glimpses of a fascinating life. I think it's significant that after the wonderful funeral service that celebrated his life, so many of the congregation commented to one another, "I had no idea that Rodney had done all that, had you?"

There are lots of good memories; Rodney carrying a scythe over his shoulder like a personification of Old Father Time all the way from Chapel Hill to Bottom Lock in order to wreak havoc on the nettles. His partiality for a glass of red wine, preferably Italian. His wry smile while unpacking and packing stock for the stall in the manner prescribed by Pat. His contributions in readings and prayers to the church services at South Kyme. Those are just a few.

Rodney was best described by the old-fashioned phrase, a true gentleman. I am grateful I had the chance to know him and regret the passing of a good friend to the Trust.

Diary Dates

We regret there will be no Boat Gathering in South Kyme this year because of the works at Bottom Lock. We hope people will understand.

Following the opening of the new bridge in Sleaford it is hoped to have a celebratory event there. More details will be available later.

The Trust will be represented at:
Langley Mill Boat Rally 23rd - 26th May 2008
National Waterways Festival 23rd - 25th Aug 2008

Navigation Trust in Africa

Sue Sowerby

While the rest of the Sowerby family was at St Ives, Ellie was in Kenya .She climbed Kilimanjaro and then spent a month working on Elephant and Lion conservation projects. As you can see she was also promoting the Sleat! Do you think the Elephants were interested??



Ellie showing
Elephants the
Navigation T-Shirt

*Photo supplied by
Sue Sowerby*

All I want for Christmas

Chris Hayes

My wish list came true when I heard just before Christmas that the Trust had been awarded a grant to refurbish Bottom Lock!

The restoration of Bottom Lock was an early major achievement of the Sleaford Navigation Society and opened up the waterway from Chapel Hill to Cobblers Lock. Sadly, over the years time has taken its toll on the bottom lock gates and, in spite of some valiant patching they are looking very much the worse for wear and are in need of replacement. Thanks to Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership we shall have a wonderful new set of gates made out of Ekki from sustainable sources.

All those who have used Bottom Lock will remember the mechanism to raise the top guillotine gate! 350 turns are needed to raise the gate to allow a boat to enter or leave the lock and a further 350 turns to lower it again when you have passed through! It can be possible to persuade young children that turning the handle is great fun but it has to be said that this ruse is quickly discovered to be a con! New gearing will now mean that far fewer turns will be needed to operate the gate to the delight of all users!

Plans are also in place to install floating moorings above and below the lock which will make access both easier and safer. The current landing stage below the lock, shown on the photograph, is somewhat limited and awkward to use. At present there is no landing stage above the lock and this makes alighting from the boat there quite an athletic process! The new landing stages will also aid the portage of canoes around the lock.

We are delighted that these improvements will make boating on the Slea a safer and more pleasurable experience. Bottom Lock is held in affection by many people who travel there by boat or on foot and it's hoped that new seating there will make visiting even better.



Boats leaving
Bottom Lock

*Photo supplied by
Chris Hayes*

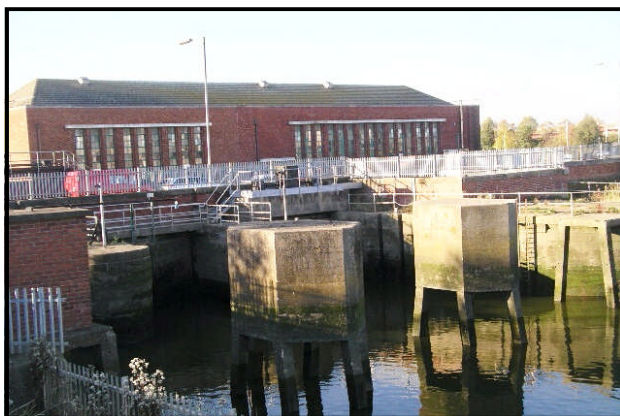
Dolphins?

Dave Carnell

Due to the increasing quality of water in our rivers it is not uncommon for seals to penetrate many miles inland, even passing through locks. Other happenings include whales becoming stranded on the Thames in London and recently another unhappy similar event in the River Humber. Now Boston Haven is in the news with a Dolphin that requires removing, happily this is a steel and concrete mooring dolphin at the entrance to the South Forty Foot Drain . This is necessary to allow the new connecting lock to be built.

Mooring Dolphin at
Boston Haven

*Photo supplied by
Dave Carnell*



The Summer Rains

David Pullen

Although North Lincolnshire and Humberside were badly hit by the monsoon that occurred around 24 June the rainfall figures further south in the county were about half of what fell in the north. Roughly speaking North Lincs had up to 90mm in the 36 hours, the Lincoln area about 65 mm and in the Sleaford area around 45mm. For Humberside and the Louth area this was classified as a 1 in 200 year event.

Nevertheless I asked Norman Osborne to have a look at the levels in Sleaford due to our ongoing discussions with the EA as to the maximum flood flows on the Slea. However the rainfall in the Sleaford area was not particularly exceptional as regards the amount that fell so the Slea was not very much affected in terms of getting anywhere near over topping the banks. The Slea is

much more affected by winter rainfall which fills up the limestone aquifer on the higher ground above Sleaford ("The Heath") which then seeps out at the springs which feed the river. The Slea therefore normally responds very slowly to a high rainfall event, but this usually has a longer term effect on the river levels.

As a result Norman's observations indicated that the river flow was indeed quite a bit higher than would normally be expected in late June/early July, but in general this was a totally positive benefit to the river as it meant that the river flow was likely to stay healthy for the whole summer. However one outcome of this monitoring was that Norman discovered an anomaly in the EA's water level gauge boards in Sleaford! There are two of these on the stretches of river in Sleaford that the Trust is most interested in; at Cogglesford on the upstream wall of the lock island, and just below the tilting weir upstream of Carre Street. What we discovered was that one or both of the level boards are probably incorrect as the levels were showing a hydraulic gradient (slope on the water) of 0.5m (19in). When a river is flowing very fast the gradient does increase due to the roughness (friction) caused by the banks and vegetation. However such a high gradient on such a short stretch would suggest something more akin to rapids rather than the normally placid River Slea! We have informed the EA and further investigations will be done to ascertain what the correct levels are.

Bream in distress in South Kyme

After the optimism about summer flow levels, due to the wet summer, at the end of September the Trust were surprised to receive a call from Richard Karberry, a resident and Trust member from South Kyme, informing us that the river was extremely low. In fact Richard was having difficulty in navigating his cruiser from South Kyme down to Bottom Lock as the water was confined to a narrow stream in the centre of the channel. On top of that there were some largish fish; Bream we think, which were thought to be in distress. The Trust made urgent calls to the EA's river management staff and to the fisheries officers which soon rectified the situation. What we learnt was that the flow on the Slea had been at record levels for the June-August period. In other words the summer flows were the highest ever recorded at the gauging station at Evedon Lock. As a result the flow control sluices at Bottom Lock had been raised for the whole of the July-September period, but had not been closed again following the mini drought from mid August onwards. The sluices

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were immediately lowered and the river recovered in a couple of days. It is somewhat ironic that the river still suffered, albeit temporarily, after one of the wettest summer's on record!

Boats in the wrong places

The wildly fluctuating river levels from June to mid August caused many boaters to change their summer cruising plans. The TV news bulletins were full of spectacular and distressing images of the floods and how they affected homes and businesses. Some boats were marooned in unlikely places such as in the middle of fields and one was even neatly dry docked on a lock Island! Trust members are not known to have suffered any such indignity and inconvenience, but there were some local problems with sunken boats.

In addition to narrow boats Wigford and Florrie Kendal having enforced sojourns on the Trent & Mersey Canal, Rhoda Ellen also ended up with a long stay on the Chesterfield Canal. Now the Chesterfield is one of the friendliest canals on the whole system, so it was not a problem. Both British Waterways and the Retford and Clayworth Boat Club (RWBC) could not have been more welcoming and helpful by allowing extended emergency moorings for Rhoda Ellen until the River Trent began to return to normal.

A day or two after the initial June rainfall event BW actively discouraged us from venturing out of Shireoaks Marina due to very high water levels in the canal. We had already been at Shireoaks longer than the normal visitor allowance. I understand that BW were actively helping the EA to try to control levels in the River Idle in Retford by pumping water up into the canal. During July we made several attempts to move her back to her home mooring at Sileby Mill on the River Soar. Finally I knew that it was time to stop worrying and let the weather settle when on one particular afternoon in July, whilst cruising single-handed down the Chesterfield from Shireoaks to West Stockwith, 50mm (2in) of rain fell in about 3 hours! The trip was cut short at Clayworth after a quick call to the BW lock keepers at Stockwith and Cromwell confirmed that the Trent was once again very high and would almost certainly be closed again at Newark and Sawley. As a result the planned 3 week visit to the Chesterfield, en route (sort of) from the Slea boat gathering in early May back to Sileby, ended up as a nearly 3 months. Thanks again to BW and RWBC for being so helpful and welcoming.

The Slea Journey: Part 2

Norman Osborne



This next section of the Slea journey is arguably the most attractive, well-known and walked part of the river/navigation, as it is easily accessible at several places.

You may recall that we have traced the river from source at West Willoughby, through Ancaster and Wilsford, past Boiling Wells, into Sleaford to join with the Nine Foot River and flow past the Hub. Here there are art and craft displays, outside views of the town and river from the top floor, and coffee and cakes and gift shop on the ground floor.

Adjacent to the Hub, at Eastgate Car Park, is the site designated for the proposed Slipway and Winding Hole (boat turning round area). There will be much activity in this area later in the year.

We are also expecting to see the New Street footbridge being replaced by the new lift bridge this year.

Walking from New Street towards the swimming pool there are three attractive mosaic designs set into the towpath, depicting horse power, wind power and man power.

At the Leisure Centre/Swimming Pool the bridge creates the opportunity to walk on the north side of the river near Lollycocks Field Conservation Area and pond. There are excellent views from here of the stone façade of the William Alvey School (built in 1851 for £1000) and the stone front of the NKDC offices in Eastgate. The path continues past the car park to Coglesford Mill.

The southern side path takes us past the sluice, (where the course of the “Old Slea” diverges from the Navigation, to re-join the Navigation just

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Top: View from Hub

Bottom: Towpath Mosaic

*Photos supplied by
Norman Osborne*

below Cobblers Lock) and past “The Nettles”, an innovative area where living green sculptures have been created. Following this path downstream there is probably one of the most picturesque views of the navigation. The warm red bricks of Cogglesford Mill appear through the screen of trees.

There is evidence of a mill on this site for 1000 years and documents prove that on this site in 1230 there was “Sheriff’s Mill”, belonging to the Bishop of Lincoln. Nowadays the mill has been restored and working demonstrations are frequently given.

Cogglesford is also the site of the first of the seven locks on the Navigation.

The towpath in the next section was completely re-laid by our friends from the Waterways Recovery Group and ourselves in 2005 and is very well used. To the south, the area of St.Giles, stands on the area known as Old Sleaford, where the town originated, and there is evidence of Iron Age coin moulds left by the Coritani tribe. There have also been finds from the Roman occupation in this area.

The sharp-eyed observer may often see the flash of iridescent blue as a kingfisher flashes past along this stretch of the navigation.

There are several pipes crossing the watercourse in this section, and on the far bank there is still some evidence of the old gasworks. We then pass under the railway bridge.

As we walk along the towpath we pass the sluice and pumphouse for the Kirkby la Thorpe irrigation reservoir.



When we reach Bone Mill Lock, adjacent to the A17 Sleaford By-Pass, it is noticeable that the top wooden cill of the lock is still visible and the change in water level through this lock is minimal.

The mill on this site was used, as the name implies, to crush animal bones to be used as fertiliser. In earlier times (1766) it was known as Walk Mill, and woollen cloth was cleaned and shrunk. In 1773 it was known as Dyers Mill and cloth was dyed on the site.

The next lock is known as Holdingham Lock. Holdingham Mill on this site was also known as Corn Mill and Tomlinson's Mill and produced flour for local bakeries until 1957, using three millstones. The old wooden waterwheel can still be seen on the upstream side of the building. The small octagonal toll office for the Navigation is also still in existence.

Across the fields to the right can be seen the village of Evedon with its squat church overlooking the ford on the Old River Sleä.

Only a short distance downstream is Evedon Lock, which was the site of a Paper Mill (demolished in the 1930's), which had produced paper since the 17th century. At the adjacent road bridge the towpath changes sides to the west bank of the Navigation.

From this point the Navigation heads north east towards Haverholme. The towpath makes a detour around some waterside properties at the attractive hump back stone bridge and then enters the Haverholme Estate woodland. This a very popular area for walkers and naturalists, to see the abundant wildlife from the towpath.

Haverholme Priory to the south of the lock was founded in the 12th century by the Cistercian order of monks and was later passed to the Gilbertine order connected with Semperingham Priory.

Haverholme Estate once belonged to the Winchelsea family and there was a boathouse at Haverholme Lock until the 1960's. Water to the Priory used to be drawn from the Navigation just below the lock, and parts of the old pumping system still remain.

The lock may be crossed by the wooden bridge to a good path to the car park.

Left: Toll Office

Right: Haverholme Water
Pump



*Photos supplied by Norman
Osborne*

July Work Party Report

Mel Sowerby

The river was still high on the Chapel Hill side after 3 weeks of rain and the landing stage at bottom lock was still covered but visible so it will soon be back to normal and allow cruising to continue in the near future. The sluices were fully up and until these are lowered boats will not be able to lock through up to South Kyme as there is insufficient water on the top side of the lock.

I noticed the remnants of the Haverholme footbridge have been washed down with the high levels and are now jammed under two of the sluices so E.A. will need to remove these before they can lower the sluices.

The work party tackled the excess weed growth on both sides of the lock and it is now back to how it normally looks in May and ready for boats to enjoy this part of the Slea.

Thanks to Rob for doing a fine job with the trimmer.

Work Party News

Norman Osborne

October - Sleaford Eastgate Car Park area adjacent to the Hub saw us removing some of the wooden piles from the river bed on the north side, in preparation for the slipway and winding hole. Some of these were sold to a couple from Colchester (Essex) for a garden feature!!!



David Pullen, Norman Osborne & Ernest Boddy at the October Work Party

Photos supplied by Norman Osborne

November - Bottom Lock was given the end of season strim/prune and tidy up.

December - Haverholme Lock was given the strim prune and tidy up treatment.



January - Most of the remaining wooden piles were removed from near the Hub in Sleaford, using the Tirfor winch again.

If you would like to be involved in any of the work parties please contact Mel Sowerby (01522 856810) or e-mail sowerbys@ntlworld.com

Top: Norman Osborne & David Pullen at the January Work Party

Bottom: Norman, David and Mel Sowerby with the Tirfor winch

Photos supplied by Steve Hayes



Badger Facts

Geoff White



A Badger

The name badger is probably derived from the french word *becheur*, a digger. The badger is a member of the weasel family. They possess musk glands which produce secretions usually strong smelling and are used defensively, for communication or both.

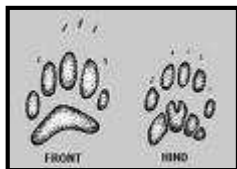
*Photo supplied by
Geoff White*

Badgers have been known to cross water obstacles but would prefer to use fallen tree trunks to cross. Nevertheless they are good swimmers and can swim good distances using dog paddle.

They spend most of the time underground and generally

(Continued on page 16)

emerge at dusk to forage. Badgers are phenomenal diggers, powerfully built with a small head, thick short neck, a long wedge shaped body and a very short tail. The body is carried on short, extremely strong limbs and feet armed with long claws. The claws, unlike cats, are non



contractile. Those of the fore feet are much longer and stronger than those of the hind. A full grown male adult on average weighs 9.3 kg and a female 8.1kg. An average total length is 903mm. for males and 874mm. for females.

Eyes are small in comparison with the size of head and of less importance than other sense organs. The ears, like other animals that do a lot of digging are small and lie flat to the side of the head. Their sense of smell is extremely well developed and their most important sense. The badger's world is full of smells- recognising individuals, their sexual state, for finding food, detecting danger and finding their way.

Sett is derived from the word cete, a collective name for groups of badgers but now refers to their home. Setts provide shelter during the day and used for breeding. A typical sett would have 3 - 10 large entrances leading to a system of interconnected tunnels and chambers. Outside each entrance would be a mound of excavated earth. It can be distinguished from a fox earth by much

larger heaps of soil outside entrances and remnants of vegetation are always present in the excavated soil.

Main food categories are earthworms, beetles, wasps, bumblebees and caterpillars. They will occasionally eat carrion and have been known to eat hedgehogs carefully.

They can cause considerable damage in urban areas to lawns, playing fields and fences. Road and rail traffic is responsible for many deaths, motorways in particular. Recently measures are being taken to prevent them from crossing roads by means of badger proof fencing, or by providing tunnels under roads.

Where badger setts undermine roads, railways, canal banks, urgent remedial attention is required where danger of subsidence threatens safety. In such



Top: Badger footprints

Bottom: A Sett

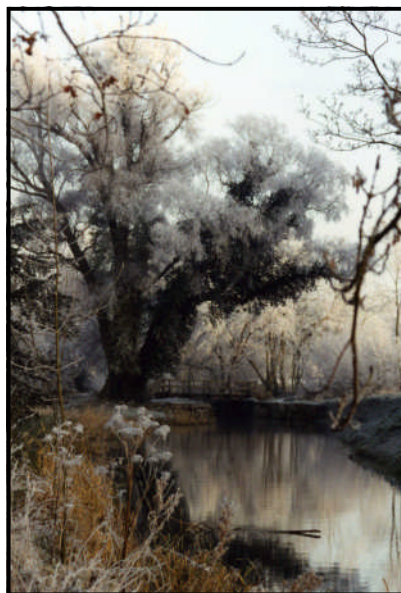
*Images supplied by
Geoff White*

circumstances badgers have to be evicted from setts as quickly as possible. In the case of watercourses it is possible to drive in sheet piling to keep badgers to landward side.

In some situations there is no alternative but to relocate badgers. This is an extremely complex issue which requires a special licence due to badger protection laws.

Images of the Slea

Starting this edition we will be printing some photos of the Slea sent in by readers. If you have a photo of the Slea you wish to share, please send it to david.osborne1987@gmail.com



2 Views from above Haverholme Lock
during Winter

Photos supplied by Norman Osborne

Haverholme: Then & Now



Top: Who and
When? Does anyone
know?

*Photo source
unknown*

Bottom: a similar
view in the present

*Photo supplied by
Norman Osborne*



Committee

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Ordinary Member	Susan Sowerby Tel: 01522 856810
Chairman, Sleaford Navigation (Sales) Ltd	Pat Taylor Tel: 01522 790652
Lincolnshire IWA Nominee	David Carnell

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Sleaford Sports Partnership (SSP) Liaison	Norman Osborne Contact number as above
Editor	David 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. All Sleaford Sports Partnership Events will be held at the David Williams Pavilion, Sleaford Rugby Club, Ruskington Road, Sleaford, NG34 7SP.

March 8th	Horse Race Night (Sleaford Sports Partnership)
March 29th	Quiz Night (Sleaford Sports Partnership)
March 30th	Canoe Paddle on the Slea
May 23rd-26th	Langley Mill Boat Rally
July 5th	Family Fun Day (Sleaford Sports Partnership)
August 23rd-25th	National Waterways Festival
September 6th	Historic Cars & Bridge Opening
TBA	St. George's Day Meal/Event (Sleaford Sports Partnership)
Usually Second Sunday of the Month	SNT Work Parties. Contact Mel Sowerby (01522 856810 or sowerbys@ntlworld.com) for details.

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, Ruskington Road, Sleaford. Further details available from Norman on 01526 832256, or Barbara on 01529 303749

