

# SLEAFORD

NAVIGATION TRUST



# NEWSLETTER

No 6 - January 2001

## Editorial

It was not a surprise but nevertheless a severe disappointment when the news came from NKDC that the navigation is to receive no more help out of the Single Regeneration Budget. The original high hopes of full restoration to navigable standard of the summit pound including the replacement of the fixed low level Eastgate car park footbridge and the refurbishment of Cogglesford lock have proved elusive. The sum total of direct help we have received is a little over £10,000 for the funding of the study conducted for us by W Halcrow to determine the new water level for the top section of the navigation. A further £80,000 towards work at Cogglesford has been a possibility for the last 18 months but that has now been lost as NKDC struggle to make ends meet in the closing stages of the SRB.

Following the work camp report published in the Waterway Recovery Group magazine 'Navvies', and reproduced in our September Newsletter, Chris Hayes wrote the following letter which was published in Navvies 184.

David and Isobel Turner

*Letter to Martin Ludgate, Editor "Navvies".*

Dear Martin

Having read a report of the WRG camp in Sleaford in Issue 182 of Navvies, I felt I needed to write to you to set the record straight. Please don't think that the Sleaford Navigation Trust have no sense of humour and are a miserable collection of pedantic nit-pickers but we were rather upset by the account Rachael Banyard gave of our hospitality.

Unfortunately WRG members did have to sleep in the Rugby Club changing rooms for one night because of a prior social booking but after that they had the opportunity to move into the club room for the rest of the week, not just for the final night as Rachael states. A member of the Rugby Club brought in a television for the group to use in the club room from Sunday evening onwards.

The group were issued their own key and pass number to the club and had access to all areas except behind the bar and in the office. The Club is remote and security is an issue. There have been break ins and it is standard practice to lock the changing rooms. There are men's and ladies' toilets available both upstairs and downstairs.

We agree that it would have been torture indeed for WRG to spend a week by a locked bar so, to counter this, at the start of the week members of the group were asked to choose their "beverages" and a supply was put in the fridge. An honesty



*Dave Pullen and Norman Osborne wrestle with part of an old millstone in the Haverholme lock by-wash. Where the channel walls had collapsed the stone was used to infill a hole near to the head of the by-wash. (Jenny Osborne)*

During the morning we were visited by canal restoration enthusiasts of the Inland Waterways Protection Society led on a walk by Dave Turner, from Haverholme to Cogglesford Mill, where they were served tea and cakes by Barbara and Jenny ..... Yes, Dave, of course they washed their hands after working at the lock.

In the afternoon, after a very pleasant picnic lunch in the sunshine, it was all hands to the pump (or rather the Tifor winch) to remove some extremely stubborn roots, which were in the side of the by-wash, and to complete moving the last of the big stones.

It was a very satisfying and enjoyable day.

Unfortunately, after a great deal of effort put in by Tony Hinsley, our BITM coordinator, the proposed work party for November 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> lacked volunteers, as it clashed with the rail chaos, floods, and was at the time when the second wave of fuel blockades were due to take place.

As it turned out, this weekend saw the Slea at the highest flow rates for many years, and water was actually spilling over, to flow through the cleared by-pass channel. Not ideal conditions for laying concrete.

Oh well! Here's to summer 2001. Happy New Year everybody.

Norman Osborne

### **Bottom Lock Autumn Work Party**

The annual trek to Bottom Lock took place on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2000 with narrowboats Wigford and Kyme cruising all the way to Chapel Hill breasted-up, just to be sociable not because one of us had run out of fuel, as we were asked on Boxing Day!

We arrived at Bottom lock by late afternoon after struggling through some weed and silt below the lock. This is the first time we have encountered these problems below the lock - we can but hope that E.A. will soon be doing some dredging.

The lock island resembled a minor jungle with shoulder high growth. The new strimmer was put to immediate use and by dusk a big difference could be seen. Steve Hayes continued from the previous work party on the clearing of a tree from the offside lock wall.

A leisurely evening was spent with a warming dram or two and wonderful stargazing.

Early morning saw the sun and a clear blue sky. The first job for Mel Sowerby was to climb the big tree with a rope so that the junior Wigfords could have fun as usual on their rope swing, swinging over the River.

The rest of the day saw the island taking shape. Pat Taylor, Chris Hayes and Sue

Sowerby tackling the old cottage garden, Thomas Sowerby gate painting, and later everyone helping with the grass mowing. Rodney Mills came to join us and he and Edward Sowerby were in charge of the reluctant bonfire. By mid afternoon all jobs were complete and Bottom Lock again looked splendid, and we were off to The Packet Inn at Dogdyke for beer and well deserved, wonderful chips! What a reward!!

Sue and Mel Sowerby

## **Make A Difference Day.**

*Under this heading the Woolwich Building Society co-ordinated a day of voluntary action on Saturday 28 October. Barbara MacKay rounded up some friends and.....*

A difference was made, to Cogglesford Lock area and to us. Cogglesford was tidied and planted, not to mention re-fenced, we got very very wet.

The Woolwich had supplied us with balloons to help us advertise our place of work but we did not put them up. The dedicated few knew their place. Derek and Debbie from Sleaford In Bloom came with a powerful strimmer and three sacks full of daffodils and crocuses and joined up with Margaret, Norman, who had a van full of tools, Jenny, David, Annabelle and Barbara, put on their boots and waterproof gear and trimmed and dug and planted.

The photographer came we all smiled and the picture in the paper could have been worse!

David, with some "help" from Annabelle, moved bottles, cans, wood and debris from deep water and bagged up branches and ivy.

As it was Halloween the Mill was serving very welcome tea and scones and we only stopped work when our cups were being re-filled with rain as fast as we could drink. Norman went back with his trailer to collect the rubbish and his visit to the Rugby Club made a difference to the bonfire.

On Sunday the sun was shining so back we went and Jenny bravely held fence posts for Norman to attack will a sledge hammer.

We decided that even if only half the bulbs grow and the fence gets knocked down again before next Spring a vast improvement had been made. We had Made A Difference and above all, we had all enjoyed ourselves.

Barbara MacKay

## **The BITM Weekend**

We had hoped to welcome the WRG BITM group on the weekend 18/19th November when we were going to concrete a new base to the by-wash at Haverholme Lock. However, BITM decided to postpone their visit over concerns about the shared use of the accommodation and the work party was cancelled. In the event one of the wettest autumns on record saw river levels rise until on the work party weekend several inches of water were flowing down the by-wash channel at Haverholme making any sort of construction work totally out of the question. BITM have offered us another weekend which is in June, and the probability is that we will save the concreting work until then.

## **Membership**

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

A Greenwell of Northwich

C A Pinchbeck of Heckington

*Remember the walks advertised in last time's Diary Dates? The following extract is taken from '174' the Newsletter of the Inland Waterways Protection Society.....*

### **Weekend Away - The Mysterious East**

#### **(The Grantham Canal and Sleaford Navigation)**

Well, it had to happen one day, and for the first time in the dozen or so years of the canal walks, we had rain from start to finish of a walk. Not that it deterred the twenty hardy souls that gathered at Cotgrave bridge waiting in vain for the fair weather Grantham types who were alleged to be showing us their canal.

The usual car shuffle took us to the new village hall at Kinoulton, a short stroll from the canal. The towpath on the length had very recently undergone a major refurbishment, so recent that "Towpath Closed" notices were still in place and duly ignored. The channel was a mixture of dry bed, badly overgrown, and a few parts holding water. Also holding water was much of our clothing so, as the rain continued to pour, we left the canal to seek the shelter of the Wheatsheaf in Cropwell Bishop.

Fortified with hot pies and mild ale we set out once more, the rain now just a thin drizzle.

Fosse Locks were soon reached, the canal plunging under the old Roman road, now the A46, through one of the few bridges that still remain, the best part of Grantham bridges having been flattened for road improvement. Into Cotgrave and a couple of restored locks, the legacy of improvement schemes in the wake of local colliery

closures.

The walk extension to view the Polser Brook, the potential re-route through Holme Pierrepont, was dispensed with, so we re-shuffled the cars and headed for our respective digs and dryness!

In the evening we re-grouped at the "Fox and Crown" in Newark, a Tynemill's House on Appletongate with several real ales and ciders, for a meal. They looked after us superbly and the evening was enjoyed by all.

Sunday found us at Sleaford for our exploration of the Sleaford Navigation. We car shuffled from our parking space by the top lock at Cogglesford Mill to Haverholme where a work party was busy doing interesting things with chainsaws and preparing the by-wash for a WRG visit in the new year. We walked upriver on a rough but well defined path through woodland, emerging to take a diversionary public path round a house then onto a recently negotiated concessionary path along the levee. Well overgrown and rough underfoot, it will hopefully improve as it becomes regularly walked.

The locks, paper mill, corn mill, dyers mill and Cogglesford mill give a clue to the nature of the navigation which can be interpreted as a succession of joined together mill leats. The traditional conflict between miller and navigator was sagely averted, the millers being given the right to collect tolls and a little toll-keepers bothy still stands, albeit at a rakish angle, by Corn Mill lock.

Onward through river meadows we reached Cogglesford Mill where those with packed lunches tarried in the sunshine(!), whilst the rest walked the last half mile into town to forage for food, a somewhat needle in a haystack activity as it turned out.

For the afternoon's expedition we were led by Dr Simon Pawley, a local historian, who took us on a tour of Sleaford. Starting from the basin at the Head of Navigation, now a supermarket car park, via Navigation House and wharves and on through the town. On route he explained the reasons for the way the town had developed as well as showing us several significant buildings. Some of these related to the navigation such as Benjamin Handley, the original company treasurer's house, before he took us back down the towpath to Cogglesford Mill where we were given a tour of the works of this restored water mill now in the care of the local council. Here the Sleaford Navigation Trust had set up a small sales stand and a large tea urn so the day ended with plenty of retail opportunity and welcome lubrication.

Thanks were given to the Sleaford Navigation Trust and Friends of Cogglesford Mill, to Simon Pawley and especially to Dave and Izzie Turner who had put the weekend together. The collection was split between F of CM and SNT, the latter putting it into their land purchase fund.

Pete Yearsley

Walks co-ordinator

## AINA

AINA stands for the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities. Sleaford Navigation Trust is deemed to be the potential navigation authority for the River Slea and Kyme Eau, and so we are privileged to be one of the 30 or so members of AINA. AINA was set up at the behest of the government following the decision not to amalgamate all navigation under one authority. The various navigation acts and by-laws which cover all navigations from the mighty Thames to the little Slea are too diverse for one authority to administer. I am the Trust's AINA representative at meetings, of which there are about 2-3 a year, and I also deal with a lot of matters where AINA is trying to co-ordinate navigation issues. Some current issues are :

- Strategic Enhancement of the Waterway network e.g. new canal routes such as the Nene/Ouse link.
- Evidence to the Government's Select Committee Inquiry into the potential of the Inland Waterways
- Safety and accident reporting and improved boater safety information(related to the tragic Gargrave accident)
- National policy on water resources and extraction licensing.
- The decline in the Hire Boat Industry.

Our Trust is not the only small navigation authority in AINA as the Bude Canal Trust, and Louth Canal Trust are also members. It is very satisfying being able to meet and work alongside the "big 4" navigations, i.e. British Waterways, Environment Agency, Port of London Authority, and the Broads Authority. In practice BW and EA provide most of the resources to run AINA since the Government has not allocated any funding to run the association. AINA is currently lobbying DETR to give some funding to the smaller navigations to support their participation in AINA since the main navigations already get significant grants from the Government to enable them to meet their responsibilities.

Working with AINA also gives the Trust a higher profile with other waterways organisations such as IWAAC (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council), and the Parliamentary Waterways Group (PWG). PWG is principally a group of MPs, advisers and specialists who have a special interest in the Inland Waterways. At the last meeting of AINA there were joint sessions with both IWAAC and PWG. I felt very grand sitting in one of the largest committee rooms in the House of Commons (but did not say anything!).

David Pullen



## Cogglesford Lock by-pass channel flood design

Behind the scenes negotiations continue with the EA regarding the design and flood capacity that we will have to provide at all the lock by-pass channels that still have to be restored. This issue is particularly important at Cogglesford Lock since the volume of water that is passed round this lock is basically the same amount that must pass Bonemill, Leasingham, and Haverholme Locks.

Our engineering consultants have calculated that a peak flow of 5 m<sup>3</sup>/second (cumecs) is the maximum that the river channel and banks above Cogglesford can handle before over-topping. Once the banks have over-topped the lock and weir structures are no longer the limiting factor for flow capacity. However EA reckon that the bank full capacity is 8 cumecs. The difference is significant because we calculate that together the present by-pass channel beside the mill, some water weiring over the lock gates, and an increased flood flow into the Old Slea by the Swimming Pool add up to 5 cumecs in capacity. We still have to convince EA to agree to the lower figure or else we will have to dig an additional by-pass channel or put in a new culvert at Cogglesford Lock to cope with the extra 3 cumecs. Of course EA are understandably nervous about flood flows right now following this winter's record rainfall, and the worst floods on some rivers since 1947 (although not on the Slea). However the nature of the water supply to the River Slea, being mostly spring fed from the limestone aquifer, makes it much less prone to sudden flash floods than rivers which directly drain surface water from urban areas and farmland.

On a positive note EA have informally agreed that the New Slea is essentially a channel which does not gain any additional flow from Sleaford to below Haverholme. Therefore whatever flood flow we eventually agree on can form the basis of the by-pass channel capacity at all the locks in between. The Old Slea is actually the natural drainage channel. By studying the original weirs which diverted excess flow into the Old Slea at Sleaford and at Cobblers Lock we can see that William Jessop, the original engineer to the Navigation Company, was a good river engineer even as long ago as 1794!

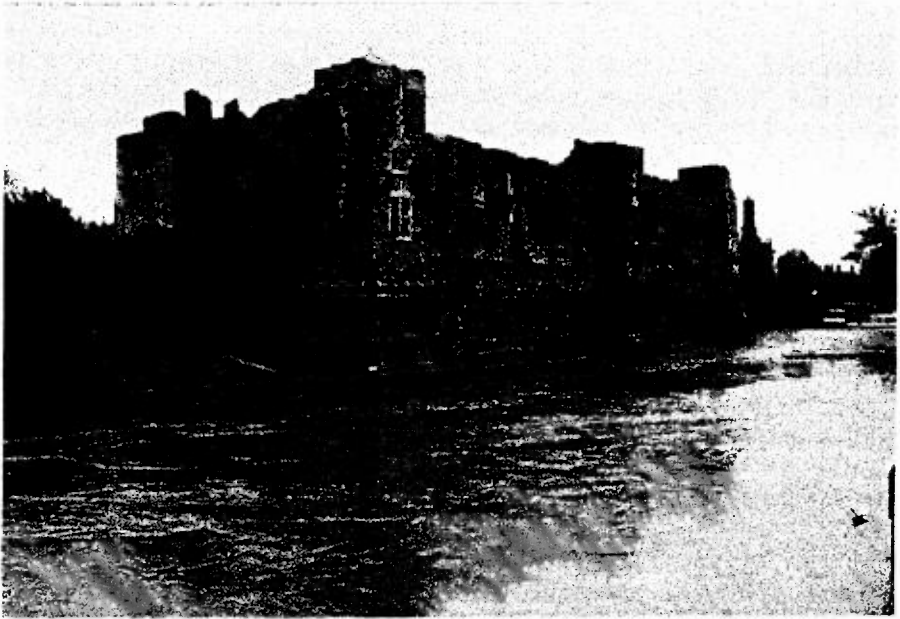
David Pullen

*Jessop was more than a good river engineer he was undoubtedly the best Britain had to offer. Sleaford was very lucky that Joseph Banks persuaded Jessop to take time out from work on some of the country's most important navigations to work on ours. We hope to find space in a later issue for an article on Jessop and particularly his part in the building of the Sleaford Navigation. Ed.*

## Rivers that "Burst their banks?"

Several Trust members have been annoyed at the journalistic licence frequently employed over recent months by TV, Radio and the Press when reporting on the floods. Most instances of flooded homes, land and property have been caused by rivers over topping their banks, but it is always reported as rivers that have "burst their banks". Of course the latter sounds more dramatic, and indeed would be more dramatic than simply over flowing over the top of the bank since it implies that the banks have failed and burst. To the recipients of the floodwater it is no doubt semantics since either way they still get a flooded house, but in engineering terms there is very big difference. Perhaps we could accept a compromise and ask them to report that rivers have "burst over their banks"!

Dave Pullen



*The River Trent in Newark was quite spectacular after "bursting over its banks" in November last year.*

## **Northern Canals Association Meeting at the Grantham Canal, Sunday 15th October, 2000.**

The Northern Canals Association meet four times a year at a variety of locations where representatives of the various societies and trusts listen to speakers and share common problems and solutions. The October meeting was held at Holme Pierrepont Water Sports Centre and was followed by a walk along the Grantham Canal. Meetings provide an excellent opportunity to find out what progress is being made by colleagues and also to hear first hand of new relevant developments in funding.

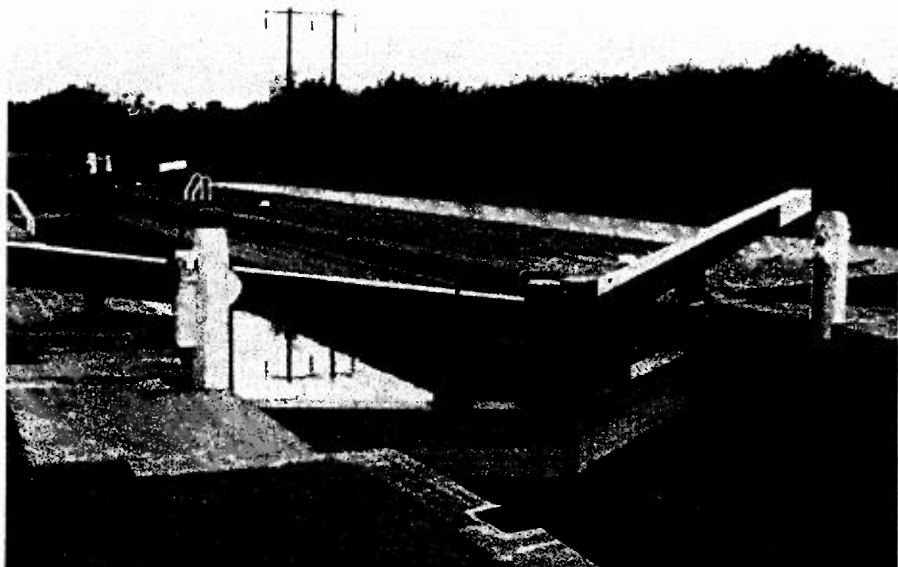
We were surprised to hear from the spokesperson from the Grantham and to read in the brochure that the current focus on the Grantham was not the restoration of navigation but environmental development. The interpretation of this became clearer as the day progressed.

An excellent towpath has been built providing a smooth surface for walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users. We were told of local miners who had now been confined to motorised wheelchairs who found the access to new surroundings provided by the towpath a godsend. Certainly this has opened up the area to the public and the nearby car park made the area a regular attraction for casual walkers. Actually the 'towpath' was more properly called an access for heavy plant in order to undertake maintenance work, funding being available under that heading!

Sections of the canal are now newly in water with restored locks. But, wait a minute, wasn't the focus now away from navigation? No worries, the raised water level has made the area more attractive to a variety of species and more aesthetically pleasing. In order to achieve the higher water level, a series of dams had to be created along the course of the canal. What better way to hold the water back than by using a wooden structure with paddle gear and beams? This ingenious multi-purpose structure bears more than a passing resemblance to what you and I would know as a lock gate!

All credit to the Grantham groups if they have found a way to work with British Waterways to make sense of the criteria for successful bidding for funding. Now could the Slea be in need of some strategically placed wooden dams.....?

Steve Hayes



*Lock No. 6 on the Grantham Canal which has recently benefited from 'environmental improvements' using SRB and Rechar funding from the EU.*

## **Snippets**

### **Canoeing the Slea**

We have approached the Sleaford Canoe Club and hope to be able to organise a joint event later in the year. The object is to introduce more people especially the young to the pleasures of 'messaging about on the river' in a safe environment and to use the upper reaches of the river which do not normally see boat traffic.

### **Environmental Study**

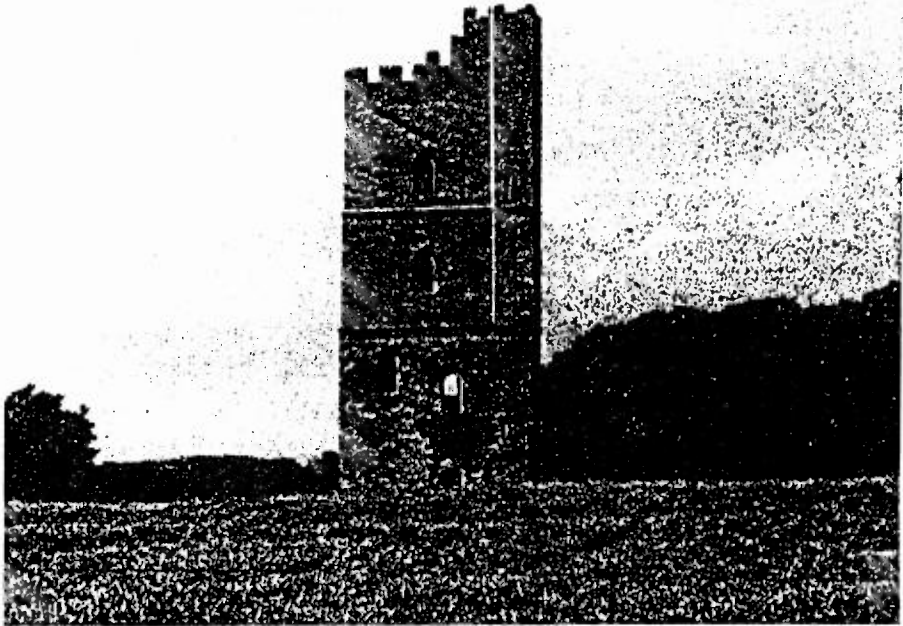
As mentioned previously the Trust have commissioned an Environmental Assessment of the Slea between Cobblers Lock and Sleaford town centre and this has now been published in draft form. Hopefully the final version will be published in time for a report in the April newsletter.

### **John Prescott visit**

Unfortunately it was not the Sleaford SRB that brought him to the area but the Newark SRB which crucially involves a navigable waterway - which is very much the flavour of the month in political circles. He was pictured in the newspapers taking a ride on a British Waterways tug.

## **South Kyme Tower**

Having admired the tower from the boat when passing South Kyme, we were very pleased to have the opportunity to visit the tower and learn more about its history. The tower is owned by the Crown Commissioners and recent repair works were grant aided by English Heritage - the tower was on the "buildings at risk" register. It is the first building in the East Midlands to be taken off this register. The view from the top of the tower is stunning - but we had to hold on to our hats firmly!



## **River Idle**

Following the successful cruise to Bawtry in May, I wrote to the Environment Agency thanking them for their assistance and offering a couple of suggestions for improvements to make life easier and safer for boaters on the Idle. Valerie Holt of the Conservation and Recreation Section invited me to a meeting which I attended along with John Baylis (IWA) and Sid White (Retford and Worksop Boat Club). We were pleased to come away with an agreement from Val that EA would provide mooring bars on the piling near the inner sluice at West Stockwith and investigate dredging of the winding hole at Bawtry.

Dave Turner

## Diary Dates

- 18 Jan. 7:45pm IWA. History of the Stamford and Welland Canal Slides and a talk by Garland Grylls.
- 3 Feb. 7:45pm SSP. Horse race night. Tickets £3 ea. refreshments available.
- 11 Feb. 11.00am NKDC Guided walk at Haverholme Priory
- 15 Feb. 7:45pm IWA. Branch AGM plus a talk: The Work of the Wildlife Sanctuary by Julie and Paul Smith.
- 15 Mar. 7:45pm IWA. Regional AGM followed by Alphabetical Lincolnshire, Slides and a talk by Ken and Margaret Latchford.
- 17 Mar. 7:30pm SSP. St Patrick's night. Irish live music and Irish food and drink.
- 1 Apr. Press date for the April SNT newsletter.
- 19 Apr. 7:45pm IWA. Conservation and Wildlife in Whisby Nature Reserve, a talk by Phil Porter.
- 21 Apr. SSP. Quiz Night. Teams of up to 6 people. Refreshments available.
- 7/8 Jul. Lincoln Water Carnival.
- 14 Jul. SSP. **NOT TO BE MISSED. FIREWORKS WITH SLEAFORD CONCERT BAND.**

The above meetings marked 'IWA' are organised by the Lincolnshire Branch of the Inland Waterways Association and are open to everyone. The venue is St Mary-le-Wigford, Church Hall, Lincoln. For details contact Mrs. V Longthorne on 01469 530138.

Meetings marked SSP are organised by the Sleaford Sports Partnership the venue being Sleaford Rugby Club. For details contact Barbara MacKay on 01529 304355 or Norman Osborne on 01526 832256

## Pat's Emporium - Mail Order Sales

Polo Shirts (various designs), Cobblers Sweatshirts, T Shirts, Head of navigation plaques, Photo Key ring, Jotters, Mugs (various designs), Book Marks, Rubbers 'Cogglesford' Notelets, Pencil Sharpeners, Pencils, Car Stickers, Necklaces, Rulers Pens

*Please ring Pat Taylor to check prices, availability and postage costs*

## Front Cover Picture

Trust and 'Sleaford in Bloom' volunteers at Cogglesford Lock on a very wet 'Make a Difference Day'. See Barbara MacKay's article inside. (Sleaford Target)