

SLEAFORD, HOLDINGHAM, RUSKINGTON & HAVERHOLME LOCK

Moneys Yard, [A] where this walk begins, was once the Head of Navigation with wharves and a turn-around loop for boats. The massive seventy feet high Moneys Mill was built in 1796, within two years of the Navigation opening, and had three sets of millstones. It was restored by the Sleaford Civic Trust in 1986.

The name of Castle Causeway [B] harks back to when this area was undrained fenland and an artificial, dry footway would have been needed across it. A limekiln was located here, where West Gate and Castle Causeway meet, and from the Middle Ages there was a corn mill too, though this was converted by the early C18th into a hemp mill when a ropewalk was established where Electric Station Road now stands. It is known that the Sleas was navigable up to Boiling Wells and that flat bottomed boats were operated by local building firms to transport limestone. The electricity sub-station was built in 1901 as a generating station for the town.

As we head out of town beyond Westgate we see something of Sleaford's railway history. [C] The path passes under a bridge that carries the original Great Northern and Great Eastern Joint Railway line to Lincoln, which opened in 1882. (We cross this line again at Ruskington) A little further on is a disused railway bridge. The lane was once the trackbed of a line up to Cranwell. (The path up towards the by-pass shadows the line too.) Remarkably this railway deep in the Lincolnshire countryside was built by the Admiralty, for Cranwell airfield was originally built in 1917 as part of the Royal Naval Air Service. The line closed in the 1920's but was briefly used again during WWII.

Ruskington's charm centres on The Beck, which flows through the High Street. [D] Opposite the churchyard there is a seat above The Beck where there was a ford until it was bridged in 1841, and it was here that the village stocks once stood. All Saints church boasts architectural styles from Norman to Victorian but its proudest possession is a south aisle window made by the Pre-Raphaelite artist William Morris in 1873. Amongst nearby buildings of interest are Poyntell Cottage dated 1669, the village Reading Room (1877) and the 1868 National School, originally called the "Winchelsea School". In Jubilee Street are the ornate "Teatotal Houses", two almshouses commemorating Queen Victoria's 1877 jubilee. Beyond Ruskington the route crosses the A153, formerly the toll road to Horncastle, at a point where one of the tollbooths stood.

The ornate Haverholme Bridge was built in 1893. [E] The Earl paid for the extra cost so that this beautiful arched bridge was built instead of a "flat" bridge proposed by the local council. In recognition of this it bears his coat of arms on one side and a date-stone on the other. From the bridge can be seen the remains of Haverholme Priory. [F] The first priory at Haverholme was established by Cistercian monks in 1137, but abandoned within two years in favour of Louth Park. In 1139 A.D. Gilbert of Sempringham was offered the site. The Gilbertines were the only order to be founded in England and the only one to admit both men and women; they were never wealthy and this is no doubt why they accepted Haverholme. They survived here until the Dissolution in 1536. The priory subsequently became a private residence, the latest owners being the Finch-Hattons, Earls of Winchelsea, whose rebuilding in the 1830's created a huge mansion with 132 rooms and a deer park. When the family fell upon hard times in the 1920's they had to sell the estate and the house was largely demolished in 1927.

Records mention a mill at Papermill Lane [G] in the C17th with a brief return to corn milling in the mid C19th. Paper production then resumed with the mill supplying printers in Boston until the 1930's. The mill leat remains on the far bank. The origins of Holdingham Mill [H], a quarter of a mile further on, reach back to the Middle Ages, though the present remains, working until 1957, date from the late C18th. Note too the octagonal tollbooth, shelter for the Navigation Company's toll collector. Both locks are fairly well preserved and the rebates for the lock gates remain. Half a mile further on the remains of Bonemill Lock are seen near the by-pass.

The final lock and mill are at the picturesque, restored C18th Cogglesford Mill on the outskirts of Sleaford. On the opposite bank, is an area of the low-lying ground known as Lollycocks Field. [K] This rough grassland was mentioned in the Domesday Book and since 1983 it has belonged to NKDC as a nature reserve.

Along Carre Street. [L] the stone archway from the original navigation wharf has been resited and behind it is Navigation House. This was built in 1838 as an office and weigh bridge and above the door is the Navigation Company's coat of arms designed by Sir Joseph Banks, an important supporter of the scheme. Banks also suggested the company motto, which he borrowed from Ovid; now badly eroded it reads "Leve fit quod bene furtor onus", that is "A heavy burden, correctly carried, becomes light". Navigation House has recently been restored as a heritage centre for Sleaford.

## SLEAFORD, HOLDINGHAM, RUSKINGTON & HAVERHOLME LOCK

This is a walk of 11½ ml (18.5 km) starting and finishing at Moneys Yard in Sleaford. (Grid Ref. TF 069457). The walk takes you along town pavements, tracks and footpaths, some of which are muddy, country lanes and the Navigation towpath.

There are various inns and cafés in Sleaford and Ruskington for refreshments with good picnic spots beside the Beck in Ruskington and at Haverholme Lock.

**MAPS:** OS. Landranger 121 (Lincoln), 130 (Grantham). Explorers 261 and 272.

### ROUTE INSTRUCTIONS

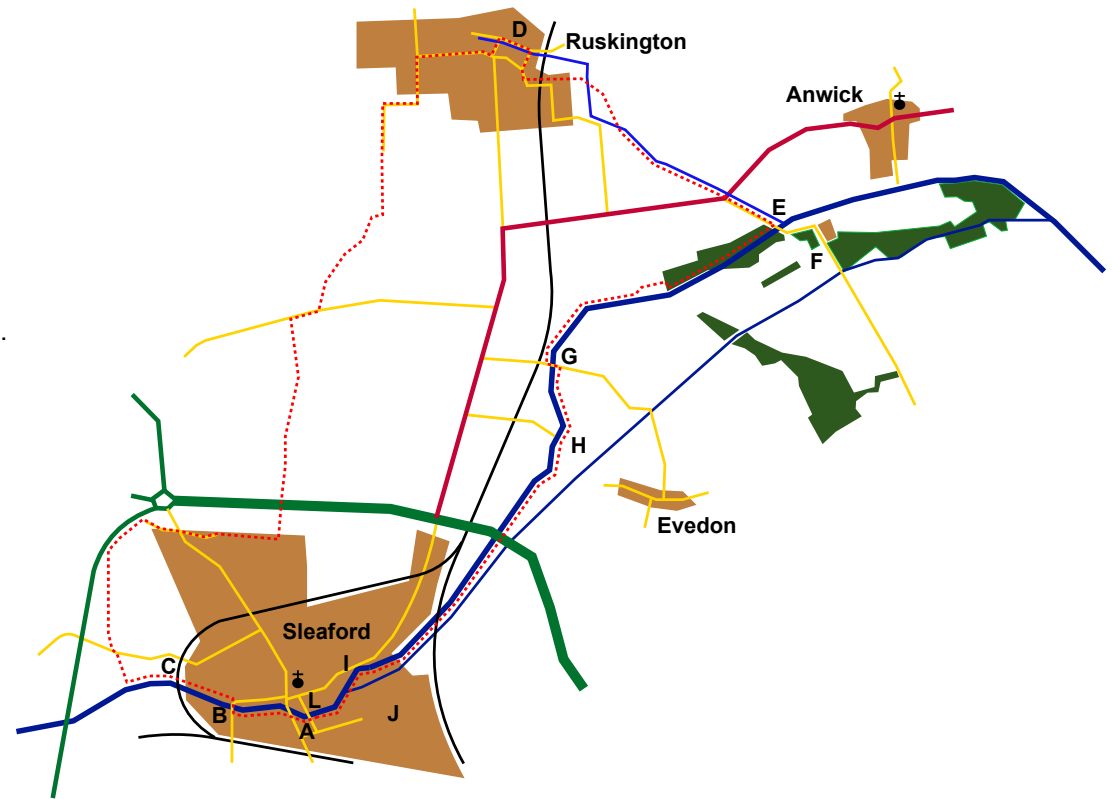
(1) Leave Moneys Yard (where there are toilets) by going through the archway between shops into South Gate. Turn right and using the pedestrian crossing continue to the Riverside shopping precinct. Turn left and walk through the precinct keeping close to the River Slea. From the far side continue along West Banks to Castle Causeway and then cross the road onto the footpath opposite, but still beside the river.

(2) Pass under a railway bridge and on reaching a second railway bridge (disused) turn right along a lane that was once the railway track. At the junction with Drove Lane (near the waterworks) look for a path just to your left which climbs uphill to join the by-pass near Holdingham. Once there look for stiles on the right giving access to a fenced woodland path.

(3) This path soon joins a lane leading to the main road in Holdingham. Cross into the "No Through Road" opposite and when this becomes unsurfaced use the farm track ahead to reach Northfield Farm. Here turn left for the A17 dual carriageway.

(4) On the far side a track continues north to a minor road known as Moor Lane. Here briefly turn right, leaving it to the left along a tree-lined track at a "Byway" sign. Beyond a footbridge the way soon becomes a surfaced lane leading into Ruskington. At the B1188 turn right. Turn left at the library to reach the church and village centre.

(5) To leave Ruskington go along High Street taking the second turning right, Jubilee Street, and then left along Station Road. Just beyond the first bend a signed footpath goes left between houses (near No. 61) to a railway footbridge. Beyond that keep forward and turn right immediately before The Beck to cross a footbridge and enter a grass field. Keep beside the left-hand hedge, going through another hedge at the field corner. In the next field aim slightly right past a large shed towards a hand gate and footpath sign.



(5) Now turn right along a track and when a junction is reached turn left. A wide grass track now leads to the A153. Cross into Haverholme Lane directly opposite, which leads to Haverholme Bridge at the Sleaford Navigation.

(6) Do not cross the bridge (except for a closer view of the remains of Haverholme Priory) but turn right on the footpath beside the navigation to pass Haverholme Lock. Continue until a private garden bars the way. To skirt this follow the waymarked path on the right to a lane, go along it for a few yards and then turn left at another waymark to rejoin the navigation. At the next road, Papermill Lane, cross the bridge and continue on the opposite bank. From now on the navigation is on your right all the way back to Sleaford.

(7) Walk the few yards to Papermill Lock, and then on to Holdingham Lock and mill from where an easy two mile walk beside the navigation will take you back into Sleaford. A footpath is provided beneath the A17 dual carriageway at Bonemill Bridge, and also under the railway near Sleaford. From Cogglesford Mill a surfaced path leads back to Carre Street and Moneys Yard.