



SLEAFORD NAVIGATION NEWS

AUTUMN 1996

CHARLES HADFIELD

It was with sadness that we heard in the summer of the death of the patron of the Society, Charles Hadfield. He died on the 6th of August, the day after his 87th birthday.

One of the most prolific of waterways writers, he was the last remaining founder of the Inland Waterways Association. He was appointed to the new British Waterways Board in 1962 and it was his influence and awareness that led away from the abandonment policy in favour of a compromise. His ideas were practical not naively idealistic and involved a large network being kept for pleasure boating.

Those who knew him wrote warmly of his generous encouragement of other, younger, writers of canal history and of his breadth of knowledge. His books remain definitive works of reference and a source of pleasure to read.

The Society was fortunate to have his support in its foundation and in recent years. At the time of the preparation of the Millennium bid letters were sent by the Society inviting support. Charles Hadfield took the trouble to reply in a warm, personal way. He referred to the achievements of the Sleaford Navigation Society in a way which clearly showed that his knowledge and interest were up to date as he commended the professional way in which we had gone about the task of restoration. He hoped that his opinion would help us in our search for funding and wished us every success in the future. In his passing we have indeed lost a friend.

Company Status (The Sleaford Navigation Trust)

For some time Trust Status has been talked about, our Treasurer, David Turner, writes to put forward the advantages to the society and also explain why this change has seemed to have taken such a long time to achieve.

"The many advantages of incorporating a society such as SNS to form a company limited by guarantee become much more important as restoration moves towards the expensive final stages. Indeed so advantageous is incorporation that the majority of restoration groups take this route though not without some trepidation for the fly in the ointment is the Charity Commissioners.

As a registered charity the Society is regulated by its constitution, sanctioned as it is by the Charity Commissioners and changeable only with their consent, and a mass of charity laws layed down by the Commissioners. As a company, Sleaford Navigation Trust, as we wish to be known, will operate under the Company Acts and the and the Charity Acts. The Company Acts require the legal framework for the SNT's operation to be set out in the 'Memorandum and Articles of Association'. These lengthy documents must be framed in a way acceptable to the Charity Commissioners and there we have a problem. With constantly evolving charity law and practice a formula satisfactory for one group last year may be unacceptable for us this year. Add to this a very heavy workload for Charity Commission staff and Society officers being volunteers and you have a situation that almost inevitably leads to delays, often for years.

To handle the technical aspects of the transition the Society has engaged Shakespeares Solicitors of Birmingham, perhaps the country's leading specialists in waterway and navigation law. Mr Roger Vernon has worked diligently for our cause having steered us around many problems such that we are at last in sight of our goal. I expect to resubmit our amended Memorandum and Articles of Association to the Charity Commissioners soon and, given their acceptance, meetings will be called to wind up the SNS and set up SNT. As things look at present, my guess is that we could be looking to do this early in the new year."

David Turner (Treasurer)

IWA National Waterways Festival, Dudley

The society manned a stand at the festival which was shared, and supported, by North Kesteven District Council. Although the festival was not attended as well as some of the previous events a good number of people visited our stand as we were part of the Waterways for Youth Passport scheme. This meant that there was more work for those members manning the stall but it did have the incidental advantage that other members could sell raffle tickets to a captive audience of parents while the children made badges as part of the passport!

Much interest was shown by visitors in current restoration progress and future plans, especially the Single Regeneration Grant for Sleaford and its implications for the restoration of the Slea and Navigation Wharf within Sleaford.

In spite of the hard work manning the stand over the weekend the general feeling was that, even though takings were not as good as we expected, the event had been a good publicity and PR exercise.

IWA Golden Jubilee Rally

On the Whit Bank Holiday the society helped to host the IWA Golden Jubilee Rally in South Kyme. A good turnout of boats ensured that there was a lively atmosphere in South Kyme, although the weather kept the public away in the numbers that we had enjoyed in 1994.

On the Saturday evening there was a dance in the Village Hall to The Edsels, a local R & B group, which was enjoyed by those who attended.

Following the church service on the Sunday all the boaters gathered together in the Village Hall for a communal lunch prepared by the local WI, all agreed that it was an enjoyable new departure from the usual pub lunch and worth repeating in the future.

In the evening we were treated to an excellent performance by Mikron Theatre of their new production, 'A Woman's Place', which charted the Suffragette movement in the early years of this century. This was followed by a bowls match.

The society and IWA stands were accommodated at the rally in a marquee hired by the IWA, this was a welcome addition that gave much needed protection from the elements.

At the rally, for the first time the society ran a trip boat on the Slea. This was kept busy during the Saturday and Sunday giving trips to the public, visiting dignitaries, and the media, which included three different television companies.

Summer raffle

The annual summer raffle was, again, a great success and raised much needed funds for the society. The Committee would like to thank all those members who sold or bought tickets for their support. We know that it often seems a thankless task when so many organisations are also trying to raise money, but thanks anyway!

The lucky winners were:-

Paul Sims, Great Barr, Birmingham.
A. Tarren, Sleaford, Lincs.
Mrs. Birtles, Chilwell, Notts.
Mrs Ricker, Lincoln

Restoration Report

Sleaford Pride

It has been generally agreed by that one of the keys to the regeneration of Sleaford is the development of the Sleas and Navigation Wharf. Our close liaison and co-operation with North Kesteven District Council has resulted in the society becoming one of the partners involved in the regeneration of Sleaford, known as 'Sleaford Pride'. The society has therefore now switched its attention to the Cogglesford Lock to Sleaford Pound. At the moment this is very much in the design and planning phase as the funding for the work is scheduled for the last years of the Sleaford Pride programme.

Committee members are actively involved in a number of the standing committees set up to oversee the progress of the regeneration. Among the activities that members are currently involved in are, preparing for the water retention study, the Tourism Committee, the Retail Committee and the Heritage Committee.

The final outcome of Sleaford Pride should be to bring visitors to Sleaford thereby creating jobs and opportunities that the area badly needs.

Water Retention Study

Included in this project is the restoration of navigable depth and retention of water in the length from Cogglesford Lock to Carre Street Weir. Before the end of March 1997 (the current financial year) we will have a definitive design and costing for dredging, bank stabilisation, bank lining and flood control. Those of you who are paying attention at this point may be asking "what about lining the river bed to stop water loss?". Yes, you are right, up until very recently, based on the Binnie & Partners Engineering Feasibility Study, we had expected to need a lining in the river bed certainly in the upper lengths of the river. However closer scrutiny of various studies by Halcrows, including actual leakage measurements for the EA,(Environment Agency - previously NRA), make it absolutely clear that bed leakage is minimal on this stretch. Incidentally, this does not in any way alter the probable need to install bed lining below Cogglesford lock for quite a length towards Haverholme.

There are two main advantages from not having to line the river bed :-

1. A large saving in cost for the work itself.
2. The rest of the work is more likely to be within the capability of volunteer labour and organisations such as ourselves and WRG. This will also save money and reduce the amount of money the Society, as partners in Sleaford Pride, will need to raise.

Old Slea Channel

A further area of the study is the flood capacity of the Old Slea. We hope to do this now so that if any alterations to the weir between the New Slea and the Old Slea are needed they can be done while we are working on this length of the river. Again we are thinking forward to the work needed at the locks to cope with flood flows as required by EA. If in times of great floods (1 in 100 year event) we can divert as much water as possible down the Old Slea it will reduce the expenditure on large by-wash weirs and channels all the way down to Haverholme.

Cobblers Lock to Haverholme Pound

At present we do not have any prospect of funding for this length. The next stage at Cobblers Lock would be to fit new gates, but without any prospect of being able to raise the water levels fitting new gates now would be a waste of money. However we have recently been approached with a possible offer of some local clay for the bank raising. As it is local it is likely to be significantly cheaper than was estimated in the ADAS report on this length. We will, in any case, still need to raise the funding for the rest of the cost of detailed design and the actual contracting work. This work is unlikely to be feasible by volunteer labour.

Christmas is coming

Just when you were despairing, when all inspiration had gone, you can banish your Christmas shopping blues and subscribe to the latest in the home shopping revolution with Sleaford Navigation sales merchandise. There is a plentiful supply of T-Shirts, Sweat Shirts, Mugs, Baseball Caps, and a limited supply of the exclusive Ruston Hornsby, Lincoln Imp Tiller Pins to pick from.

To get more details of that ideal stocking filler please ring Pat Taylor for details Tel. 01522-790652. (Demi Moore sounds like a good stocking filler to me! Do you think that Pat could help out. Ed.)

South Kyme Winding Hole

At the moment the only possible turning place for boats of more than about 40 feet in length is at Cobblers Lock, and the Committee have felt for a long time that it would be desirable to put a winding hole in South Kyme, just before the concrete bridge. This might also have the effect of encouraging higher cruisers to travel up the Slea to South Kyme. Recently the society has approached one of the local landowners to see if they would allow us to use some of their land to build a new winding hole.

Help, more members needed.

As the society continues to progress with the restoration and the ultimate goal of reopening the Slea through into Sleaford, the amount of work involved becomes greater. What is now needed is a concerted membership drive in and around Sleaford. Members are needed both in an active role, to assist with restoration either on committees, or when necessary, with spades or trowels. Members are also welcomed in a passive role to support and encourage the restoration. The larger the society, the more effective it becomes as a pressure group.

Northern Canals Association

The Northern Canals Association is an informal association of canal restoration societies who meet three times a year to discuss and share common problems. There is also a Southern Canals Association. Recently, following the groups visit to Sleaford in the Spring of this year, several members have begun to attend these meetings. We always seem to learn something from each other, whether it be how to make lottery bids, raise funds locally and investigate other sources of funding, or just comparing notes on technical and engineering problems and solutions. For example, recently we learned of a canal society that had secured funding by writing their own Cost Benefit Study. Previously we have assumed this would have to be an expensive report by independent outside consultants. We now intend to draft our own version over the Winter months.

Slea Walk

We understand that North Kesteven District Council, as part of their annual programme of walks, are planning a walk along a part of the Slea. The walk will start from Money's Mill Car Park, Sleaford, and finish at Cogglesford Mill. Anyone wishing to take part in the walk should meet at 1.15pm. on December 29th. The walk will be guided by Bill Hunt, one of the society's founder members and Slea expert. If you need any further details please contact Barbara MacKay Tel. 01529-304355.

Day Star Theatre

The Society has booked Daystar Theatre Company to perform their "Mr Brindley's Worst Ever Christmas" on Saturday, January 11th at The Lion Hotel in Sleaford at 7.30. Tickets will be available at the door at a cost of £3 for adults and at a concessionary rate of £2.

For the information of those members who are not familiar with the company, Daystar Theatre are well known on the canals and their style of theatre is 'unique, funny, thoughtful and informal'. Those members who attended the performance last year will remember an enjoyable evening. Let's all turn out and give Daystar the audience they richly deserve, the society can only continue to put on social events with your support.