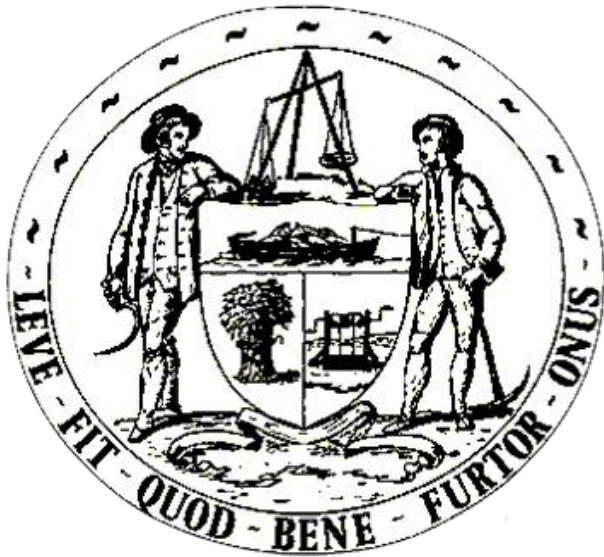


# SLEAFORD NAVIGATION TRUST



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**Summer 2010**

# The Sleaford Navigation Trust: -

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## 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.

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## Articles

Please send all articles to: [david.osborne1987@gmail.com](mailto:david.osborne1987@gmail.com) or

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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

*David Osborne*

# Chairman's Report

**Chris Hayes**

Work has been continuing on the slipway and winding hole in Sleaford and plans are afoot for the official opening at 11.00am on Saturday July 3rd. A word of warning to anyone planning to travel to Sleaford, that is the weekend of the RAF Waddington Airshow and the roads around Lincoln will be very busy indeed. It will be well worth while to find an alternative route. A whole range of celebratory activities will be taking place in Sleaford including Tastes of Lincolnshire food stands and cookery demonstrations, a Farmers' Market and a visit from the Chesterfield Canal Trust trip boat. SNT members would be particularly welcome in the celebration of this major achievement for the Trust.

Although the Sleaford Navigation is not managed by British Waterways it's interesting to note the current developments which have confirmed BW's movement towards charity status. At a recent meeting of Northern Canals Association, Robin Evans, Chief Executive of British Waterways, emphasised the way in which he envisaged the relationship between waterway societies or trusts and BW changing to one of greater cooperation. His suggestion was that the skills and expertise offered by volunteers will have a more significant role than in the past. This can only be of benefit to restoration and be a welcome change. He did remind representatives of those groups though that some change will also be needed from them too in that the cooperation can only build on mutual respect. It seems possible that some of this thinking may eventually have relevance for the Environment Agency too. If that were to be the case then here too the role of the volunteer may change and that would have considerable impact on the Slea and the Trust. The whole issue of the increased use of volunteers in waterway restoration is extremely interesting and one which the committee is considering.

Times are changing!

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**New members?**

# Something for Everyone

Dave Carnell

Sounds interesting but if your outdoor pursuits are water orientated then your rights of access to rivers and canals are limited. For reasons best known to the government in England the Countryside Rights of Way Act and the Right to Roam exclude Access to Water for leisure purposes.

Due to national campaigning the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies have amended their legislation to allow conditional access to water courses. A number of national bodies in England are renewing their attempts to gain this access. The Inland Waterways Association, British Canoe Union, Canoe England and the Broad Authority have produced a template of a letter for interested people to send to their MPs, see [www.riveraccess.org](http://www.riveraccess.org). With newly elected MPs coming into office now would be a good time to solicit their support.

Over the last few years canoeing has become increasingly popular on the Slea, not only at the river head but along the length of the navigation. This entails canoes being portaged round some of the derelict locks, whilst on others, Haverholme and Cobblers in particular, experienced canoeists shoot the white water over the lock top sills.

In an effort to encourage greater use of this activity the Trust have obtained designs of suitable canoe landings, approved by the Environment Agency, for installation at various sites.

The costs of providing these is being investigated with a view of identifying sources of funding.



Canoes on the Slea at Haverholme

*Photo supplied by Norman Osborne*

# Sleaford Slipway

David Pullen

Work started on the slipway in February and commenced with raising the existing concrete paving pathway which will be replaced by a new block paviour path in arc round the head of the slipway.



Removal of old path

*Photo supplied by David Pullen*

The initial phase also involved developing a solution for access on and off the site to give adequate protection to roots of the various trees on site. A total of 27 trees will remain on the site, and the slipway and the grass access track were carefully designed to minimise the loss of trees, but it has required very careful working operations to work round the remaining trees. One smallish Lime tree and a medium sized Cherry tree had to be felled to make way for the slipway and these will be replaced

in the autumn with established container grown trees. Access is via temporary “Bogmat” tracking to prevent soil compaction and tree root damage. These are 4m x 1m rafts of 75mm thick oak planks.

The river bank upstream of the slipway was then excavated to form a working terrace for setting out the piles for the widened section for mooring and turning. The new piled walls forming the retaining walls for the widened river bank and the entrance to the slipway were then driven. The piling is actually recycled plastic and although it looks like traditional steel piles it is in fact a very different type of structure. The structural strength is provided by 4m long galvanised steel tubes which fit inside integral hexagonal section within the plastic pile sheet. The steel tubes and the plastic piles are driven together using a single piling hammer forming an integrated structural wall. Using re-cycled plastic makes this solution very environmentally friendly as well as having a long life as there will



The “Bogmat” tree protection system in use

*Photo supplied by David Pullen*



The piling system, and piling in progress

*Photos supplied by David Pullen*

be a minimal corrosion risk compared to traditional steel piling. This solution also allowed piling the piling equipment to work beneath the canopies of the trees without requiring any branches to be removed. The final phase of the piling included a temporary coffer dam, using sheet steel piles across the slipway entrance to enable the slipway to be excavated down to below water level.

After the piling was complete the first phase of dredging of the widened river and the entrance to the slipway were excavated. The excavations created over 100 tonnes of arisings, (waste soil in laymans terms), to be hauled off site. The soil is going to Brauncwell Quarry to be re-cycled as top soil. A significant amount of the best topsoil is also being stored on site for landscaping the site at the end of the project.

The base of the slipway and the capping beams for the piled walls were the next task. This involved some very precise form work and shuttering and very precisely detailed reinforcing steelwork.

The slipway is now structurally complete and the block pavours below the waterline have



Concreting the slipway

*Photo supplied by David Pullen*



Slipway in the water for the first time

*Photo supplied by Dave Pullen*



Cellular root protection system

*Photo supplied by Dave Pullen*

been laid. The coffer dam has been removed and at last the view of the river is beginning to take on its eventual look.

Work has now switched to creating the new path and the reinforced grass access track. Where the path passes close to tree roots a special cellular protection system is being laid under paviour blocks. Likewise a special modular block system is forming the grass track. Both the path and track are completely permeable to rainfall so that the trees and grass will maintain healthy root systems.



Coping stones

*Photo supplied by Dave Pullen*

The most recent stage has seen the specially cast coping stones delivered to site. These most impressive castings will provide a stunning finish to the top of the walls of the turning area and slipway and complete the works to a high standard consistent with the rest of The Hub zone within the Sleaford Conservation area.

We expect the construction phase of the project to be complete by the end of April. The final stage will involve grass seeding and possibly some turf laying to ensure the

site is ready for the official opening, together with the new lift bridge, on July 3. Together with the lift bridge this will complete the Trust’s “Head of Navigation Project”.



# The Ready Trip

John Line

When thinking more and more about the upcoming boat gathering on the 1st of May, it was decided that we should have a leisurely cruise to Cobblers Lock with the idea of some tree pruning and tidying on the way. So three narrow-boats, Florrie Kendall, Wigford and Fairies Wear Boots set off for the Easter weekend.



Slipway in the water for the first time

*Photo supplied by Steve Hayes???*

The first night was spent at Bottom Lock, although the new growth of reeds had to be raked back from spreading through the new moorings before we got settled. After everyone had had their evening meals we had a very enjoyable game of skittles on the lock island, torches were needed at this time of night though so that added another element to the game! We were also joined by some chaps from the internet forum 'Canoe With A View' who had paddled down from Haverholme Lock after reading about the Sleas on the forum.

The next morning we said our goodbyes to our new friends, who were continuing their journey to Dogdyke marina, and set off for the next part of our trip. Wigford and Florrie Kendall towed Fairies Wear Boots up to South Kyme backwards just in case there were problems winding at Cobblers Lock and a tow back was needed. I then jumped aboard Wigford for the remainder of the journey and stood on the roof so that any tree pruning could be quickly done to ensure safe passage. The trees thin out after Church Bridge so there was time for a cuppa and some of Sue's chocolates - thanks Sue! The only problem we encountered after Church Bridge was Halfpenny Hatch, the water level was quite high due to all the recent rain so that reduced the head clearance considerably. Florrie Kendall just managed to sneak under but Wigford had to 'borrow' some of Florrie's crew to act as ballast so that we could squeeze

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The boats in Cobblers Lock chamber

*Photos supplied by ???*

through.

We then managed a leisurely cruise up to Cobbler's Lock, the end of navigation at the moment. Both boats sat in the lock for a photo session and a break before backing into the by-wash to wind and headed back to South Kyme without any further problems. After mooring up in South Kyme, and eating, again, we decided to spend the evening in the Hume Arms. The landlord and landlady, VeeJay and Maeve, were telling us of their plans for the boat gathering, including a quiz night on the Friday night and live music on the Saturday, which we thought sounded interesting and are looking forward to.

The next morning was a slow starter, but we managed to get back to our home moorings at Chapel Hill and a great weekend was had by all.



## Bottom Lock—An Oral History (Part 2)

Shirley & Bill Kirk

### Visitors to the lock

Visitors to the lock included the boatmen and women who worked on the barges transporting sugar beet from the fields to the sugar factory at Bardney. Because the land could be waterlogged, it was easier to get the sugar beet out by boat - lorries wouldn't have been able to get to the fields. The barges would tie up for a couple of weeks on the river while the beet was loaded. Shirley remembers the bargees coming across to the lock keepers cottage in the evening to play cards and chat to her parents. Jess Overton was one of the barge owners. He gave Dad a number of clay pipes - Dad smoked so much he could wear a pipe out quite quickly.

There were a lot of tramps around too. Sometimes they would knock on the door - 'cup o' tea missus?' they would ask. They frightened Shirley - when she looked out of the bedroom window in the morning she sometimes saw one asleep by the bank. Her mother always told her not to speak to anyone she didn't know. When she was out doing an errand, she would keep her head down to avoid looking at them.

Crowds of anglers, mostly from Sheffield would come to fish. They came by train to Dogdyke station, or by coach. The family got to know some of the regulars and Mum would make them cups of tea. In return, they would bring sweets and chocolate for the children, or pieces of cutlery for Mum. Subsequently, the Kirks had the best knives and forks for miles around!

One particular visitor was a well to do gentleman who owned a sweet factory in Sheffield. He would arrive in a 'posh' car - cars could get right up along the bank in the summer. The banks were impassable in bad weather though. Dad would give him a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of one of the pigs he kept after it had been slaughtered - there was rationing then so the man would have been grateful and he brought sweets for them. In those days, anyone with a large enough garden, or plot of land would keep a pig. It was a big occasion when the 'pigman' came to slaughter it. The water was put on to boil in the copper washing tub at 5 in the morning so it would be hot enough when he arrived at 7 to kill the pig. The boiling water was used to scrub the slaughtered pig and remove the bristles.

The man also 'loaned' Dad a shotgun - it was a very fine gun, a Purdy possibly,

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the Rolls Royce of guns. At the time Dad had an old fashioned single barrelled 12 bore gun. Dad always regretted not buying the Purdy when the man offered it to him at a good price.

Mum's father came to stay at the cottage for a while. Granddad had cataracts and could hardly see. Nevertheless, he would take a gun and listen for the crows - shooting at them wildly. He was a nuisance and a danger to everyone recalled Shirley!

### **A wartime tragedy**

One Sunday, in March 1941, the family were sat having their dinner when they heard a plane flying low over the roof. Suddenly there was a loud explosion - the shock waves travelled through the water and shook the cottage. The pumping station nearby at Chapel Hill had been bombed by the enemy aircraft. It was thought afterwards that the pumping station had been mistaken for a factory because of its tall brick chimney. Dad rushed to see if he could help, but the Richardson family who lived in the station house had been killed instantly. The pumping station itself was untouched and the machinery, or 'the engine' as it was known locally, was still pumping away. John and Annie Richardson, their sons John and Thomas and daughter Annie were buried in the churchyard at Chapel Hill. Their other daughter Ena survived as she wasn't in the station house at the time, she had been invited to Sunday lunch by her fiancé's parents Mr and Mrs Maplethorpe.

Dad always said his most vivid memory of the awful scene was the strange sight of fluffy yellow chicks scrambling about the bricks of the wrecked house. They heard later that fighter planes from RAF Digby shot the enemy aircraft down over the Wash.

The site, like many other bomb sites at the time, wasn't cleared for years and Shirley always hated having to go past it when she was doing errands as it scared her. During the war, Dad would often stand on the island and watch the Lancaster bombers flying out and returning back to base after their mission - sadly not all of them did come back.

## Friend or Foe?

Dad worked hard and so looked forward to his Saturday nights at The Crown in Chapel Hill. He enjoyed chatting to locals and any new faces that appeared. He would often invite people back to the cottage and Mum would find complete strangers in the house the next morning!

A short while before the outbreak of war, Dad brought back 2 foreign chaps from the pub. They had told him they were travelling round on holiday and Dad said they could put their tent up at the lock. Each day they pedalled off. Mum noticed that they had expensive looking cameras and tripods. When they returned, Dad would chat to them about what they had been doing and it seems they had been touring the sites of the local airfields at Digby, Cranwell and Coningsby.

After a week, Mum wanted her privacy again and Dad diplomatically told them it was time to be moving on. Some months later Mum and Dad got an envelope through the post postmarked Germany and it contained some good quality photos of the local area. Looking back, could these 2 well spoken foreigners have been spies? It seems very suspicious that they were taking photographs in the vicinity of the military airfields. Or was it just a curious coincidence?

Mum and Dad had fond memories of living on the island and Shirley enjoyed her time there as a child - in particular she remembers some happy Christmas days there. However, it was a very dangerous place and 'it wasn't an easy life'. Looking back, she wouldn't have advised anyone to live there.

# Bottom Lock 1983 - My first trip on the Slea

Melvyn Haigh



Bottom Lock Island, with cottage

*Photo supplied by Melvyn Haigh*

The recent two part article in the newsletter about life in the cottage at Bottom Lock prompted me to search for a couple of photos of my first trip there before the lock re-opened in 1986.

In the early Spring of 1983 I was asked by a fellow boater in Lincoln to join a small group of boats at a gathering at Bottom Lock at the Spring Bank Holiday. The idea was to try and gener-

ate local interest and raise the awareness of the aims of the Sleaford Navigation Society.

On the Friday after work we left the Brayford and moored overnight at Bardney where we met up with others who had arrived earlier in the day. The following morning we headed for Chapel Hill and creeping through the flood doors, took our first tentative steps up the Slea. Arriving at Bottom Lock we found the whole area to be somewhat overgrown, but the derelict lock cottage was still standing and there was an apple tree in blossom in what had been the garden.

Mooring was difficult with no jetty, but about eight boats managed it and while most eventually returned to Chapel Hill (and the pub) two of us opted to stay overnight in the lock chamber.

The following morning we reversed out and having assisted each other to wind, headed back to the Witham and home to Lincoln.



Boats in the lock chamber

*Photo supplied by Melvyn Haigh*

# Work Party Reports

## February

The engineering blue brick walls were taken down at the site of the Slipway at Eastgate Car Park, Sleaford, and later moved from the site to be saved.

## March

The saved blue engineering bricks were palletised and some were cleaned.

## April

Ivy growth was removed from the Haverholme road bridge.

Vandalised coping stones on the by-wash were replaced by concrete.

In the afternoon a depth survey of the channel in Sleaford from the Slipway to Cogglesford Mill was completed. This is in preparation for the proposed “Trip Boat” for the 3<sup>rd</sup> July Grand Opening.

## May

Old sheet piling in the compound at Cobblers Lock was cleaned, wire brushed and painted with bitumen.

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## Committee

Chairman	Chris Hayes 10 Chelmer Close , North Hykeham, Lincoln LN6 8TH Tel: 01522 689460
Secretary	Steve Hayes Contact as above
Treasurer	Penny Carnell Conifer Cottage, Northend, Goxhill, South Humberside, DN19 7JX Tel: 01469530138
Engineer	David Pullen Brinkburn House, Church Street, Scothern, Lincoln LN2 2UA Tel: 01673 862278
Ordinary Member	Debbie Scott Tel: 01529 305755
Ordinary Member	Susan Sowerby Tel: 01522 856810
Chairman, Sleaford Navigation (Sales) Ltd	Pat Taylor Tel: 01522 790652
Lincolnshire IWA Nominee	David Carnell

## Non-Committee Contacts

Membership Secretary	Jenny Osborne, Bank House, Ruskington Fen, Billinghay, Lincoln, LN4 4DS Tel: 01526 832256
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.

April 3rd	Proposed Head of Navigation Celebration for the slipway and bridge
First weekend in May (Bank Holiday)	South Kyme Boat Gathering
July 17th & 18th	Chesterfield Canal Festival at Worksop
Usually Second Sunday of the Month	SNT Work Parties. Contact Mel Sowerby (01522 856810 or <a href="mailto:sowerbys@ntlworld.com">sowerbys@ntlworld.com</a> ) 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

