

This is one of two linear walks along the Sleaford Navigation. It finishes at Ferry Bridge, a point slightly beyond the halfway mark where there is limited roadside parking.

We begin in Moneys Yard, Sleaford [A] and the terminus of the navigation. Moneys Mill itself dates from 1796, being built two years after the canal opened to traffic and was prime commercial property, for grain for milling could be unloaded at the door. It stood on an "island" created by a cut made from East Banks that curved round to the wharves by Carre Street, where it rejoined the navigation and thus enabled boats to turn in readiness for their voyage back to the Witham. Remnants of the "cut" remain near the Lincolnshire Echo office and alongside East Banks.

Nearby in Carre Street is the preserved stone gateway to the Navigation Wharf, moved here from its original position in Eastgate, Sleaford. Behind it is the restored Navigation House built in 1838 by the Navigation Company at the height of its prosperity. By then it had been in business for forty-four years during which time increased trade brought a need for offices and a weigh-house to exercise proper control over weighing of cargoes and toll collection. The Navigation Company's coat of arms over the doorway was designed by Sir Joseph Banks, who had been an important supporter in getting the necessary Act of Parliament passed to create the navigation in the first place. Sir Joseph also suggested the company motto, which he quoted from Ovid; this reads (though now badly eroded) "Leve Fit Quod Bene Furtor Onus" which translates as "A heavy burden correctly carried becomes light". Navigation House has recently been restored into a heritage centre for Sleaford.

Indeed the whole of the wharf area [B] has undergone regeneration in recent years. Pride of place goes to The Hub, the National Centre for Craft & Design, which is housed in a converted seed warehouse. The original business was founded in 1880 by James Hubbard and became the largest supplier of marrowfat peas in the country. The present building dates from 1938 but in 2004 it was converted, both internally and externally, into an ultra-modern art and craft gallery with 1,000 square metres of exhibition space, craft workshops, a shop and café. The rooftop gallery and veranda are particularly worth visiting for their stunning views over the town.

Another sign of change in Sleaford is along East Banks where the new housing of Berkeley Court built in 1980 occupies a former factory site belonging to Lee and Green, "Makers of High-class Mineral Waters", which operated from approximately 1880 until the 1940's. The metal sculpture here represents the sails of the barges which travelled up the navigation and was erected by the Civic Trust.

The slipway on the opposite bank allows trailboats to use the section of waterway between Cogglesford Mill and Riverside Green. This, together with the new lifting bridge, forms the new Head of Navigation planned by Sleaford Navigation Trust and funded by Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership, WREN and the Inland Waterways Association.

Along East banks three mosaic panels are set into the towpath illustrating the three sources of power available to the navigation boatmen; the wind, horsepower and man himself. Nearby is the Sleaford Sports centre. The town's first swimming baths were built on this site in 1886, ostensibly to avoid any health hazards to the towns youth from their habit of bathing in the river, but also apparently (and perhaps principally) for underlying reasons to do with protecting the sensibilities of Victorian young ladies.

Just beyond the baths the Old River Sleas diverts to the right over a sluice. The New River Sleas was not, as is often supposed, created when the navigation was dug. Two channels are known to have existed for centuries, and certainly from medieval times. We shall see the Old Sleas again at Cobblers Lock, just before the end of the walk.

On the opposite bank is an area of the low-lying ground where willow osiers were once grown for basket making. Known as Lollycocks Field this rough grassland was mentioned in the Domesday Book. It was bought by NKDC in 1983 to preserve its wild character and is now maintained as a nature reserve. Beyond "Lollycocks" we come to an area known as Old Sleaford and the Cogglesford Mill.

Old Sleaford, [C] as its name suggests, was settled before the modern town and its site stretches over the nearby meadows and under the housing estates beyond. The area has proved rich in archaeological finds dating as far back as the Neolithic era around 4,000BC. It remained occupied throughout the Iron Age and there is evidence of a mint

here, indicating a settlement of some importance, a sort of local “capital” for the Coritani tribe. The stoney “coggled” (or cobbled) ford lay a little to the east of the present mill and would have been on a line with the Roman road, Mareham Lane, coming up from Bourne in the south towards Lincoln. Excavations have revealed an extensive Roman settlement here too, and again a mint seems likely for coin moulds have been found together with literally hundreds of coins; over 700 from “dig” alone. The area subsequently became an important Anglo-Saxon site too before the growth of present day Sleaford a mile to the west.

Cogglesford Mill [D] was one of many watermills on the River Slea, which explains the New Sleas alternative name of the Mill Stream. As a watermill site the origins of Cogglesford may go back to Anglo-Saxon times and for centuries it was known as the “Sheriff’s Mill”, although the building we see now dates from the early C18th. Additions made in the C19th can be easily distinguished by looking at the brickwork; older, smaller bricks form the lower part of the building and are laid in “Flemish” bond with larger bricks in “English” bond forming the upper, newer parts. Following the decline of the navigation the mill converted to steam power but eventually closed in 1885 with some of the site (nearest to the lock) becoming part of Sleaford’s sewage works. This lock had the second highest rise out of the seven on the navigation being eight feet six inches (2.5 metres). Note too that the navigation was widened in front of the mill to allow boats to turn.

Beyond Cogglesford, near the by-pass, was Bonemill Lock (formerly Dyers Mill Lock) and a little further along is Holdingham Mill, formerly the Corn Mill, Tomlinson’s Mill or Nash’s Mill. [E] Some of the buildings are still there. The rebates for the lock gates are well preserved and some rusting fittings remain in place. But, most interesting is the unique, octagonal toll collector’s hut dating from the opening of the navigation in 1794 in the garden of the mill house opposite.

Next comes Papermill Lock. [F] Papermaking has been recorded here since the C17th, though there was a brief return to corn milling in the mid 1800’s. The last mill supplied paper to a printing works in Boston and was only demolished in the 1930’s. Again the lock gate rebates are noticeable, whilst on the far side the millrace and mill foundations can still just be made out. There have been finds of Roman coins nearby too.

At Haverholme Lock [G] there are obvious signs of restoration with the provision of a new bywash by the Sleaford Navigation Trust. This lock had the highest rise on the whole navigation - nearly ten feet. For a while, following the closure of the navigation, the disused lock was roofed over by the owners of Haverholme Priory and used as a boathouse. The old machinery beside the lock may have been part of a turbine water supply system for Haverholme Priory. The elegantly arched road bridge nearby dates from 1893 and bears the arms of the Earl of Winchelsea in recognition of the fact that he agreed to fund the extra cost when the local authority would only pay for a simple flat bridge. Because a parish boundary runs along the river here half the bridge is in Ewerby and half in Ruskington.

Looking across the bridge the remains of Haverholme Priory are seen beyond some woods. Haverholme is the “island between two rivers” – which remains true today with the Old Sleas still flowing to the south. The first priory founded here was for Cistercian monks from Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, who had been given the land in 1137 by Bishop Alexander, but they found the low-lying marshy ground inhospitable and within two years had moved off to Louth Park. It was then offered to St. Gilbert of Sempringham, whose Gilbertine order was much less wealthy and could therefore not afford to be so choosy. The Gilbertines however, despite complaints, stuck it out for 400 hundred years until the Dissolution in 1538. The priory passed through various ownerships during the succeeding two and a half centuries being much extended by Sir Jenison Gordon in 1788 before coming into the possession of the Finch-Hatton family, the Earls of Winchelsea. They in turn altered the house considerably, especially in 1835, and held the property until 1927 when it was demolished but for the surviving tower. The family included several eccentric members, one of whom fought a duel with the Duke of Wellington and one who kept a tame lion on the drawing room sofa. (It eventually had to go to London Zoo!)

Beyond Anwick is Cobblers Lock, [H] the sixth out of seven and with a rise of seven feet six inches, and where the Old River Sleas rejoins the New Sleas. A short distance further brings us to a bend in the navigation known as Appletreeness, the “Headland near the Apple Tree” (not named on OS.maps). It is here that the Sleaford Navigation becomes the Kyme Eau, at the head of navigation for this ancient, navigable tidal waterway from the Witham that had existed since medieval times. For instance it is known that building supplies for Tattershall Castle were shipped from here.

About midway between Appletreeness and the end of the walk at Ferry Bridge we pass the halfway point of the navigation at GR142499. Some old maps name Ferry Bridge as “Halfpenny Bridge” and it was also known locally as “Ha’penny Hatch”. [I] There are two conflicting, though plausible, versions of how these names came about. The first is that the “halfpenny” relates to the passenger charge here in the days when there was a ferry, and later a tollbridge. The second tells that local children were paid a halfpenny to jump onto boatloads of hay, so that their weight flattened it sufficiently to prevent it catching on both this bridge and Town Bridge in South Kyme.

## SLEAFORD NAVIGATION MONEYS YARD TO EWERBY WAITHE.

A linear 6¾ ml (11 km) walk starting at Moneys Yard carpark, Sleaford, (Grid Ref. 069457) and finishing at Ferry Bridge, near South Kyme, (Grid Ref. 152502). The walk is along the towpath which is initially surfaced in Sleaford but otherwise grass with some muddy sections. This is one of two walks along the full length of the Sleaford Navigation between the town and the River Witham at Chapel Hill; this walk covers the first half. It may be done in one direction only, with a pre-arranged pick-up from Ferry Bridge, or as a “there and back” outing, or combined with Walk 3 to reach Chapel Hill. It would be easy to follow in reverse, so ending in Sleaford.

Refreshments can be found in various inns and cafés in Sleaford. Anwick (which is off the route) has a village stores / PO. Good places to picnic are at Haverholme Lock or Cobblers Lock.

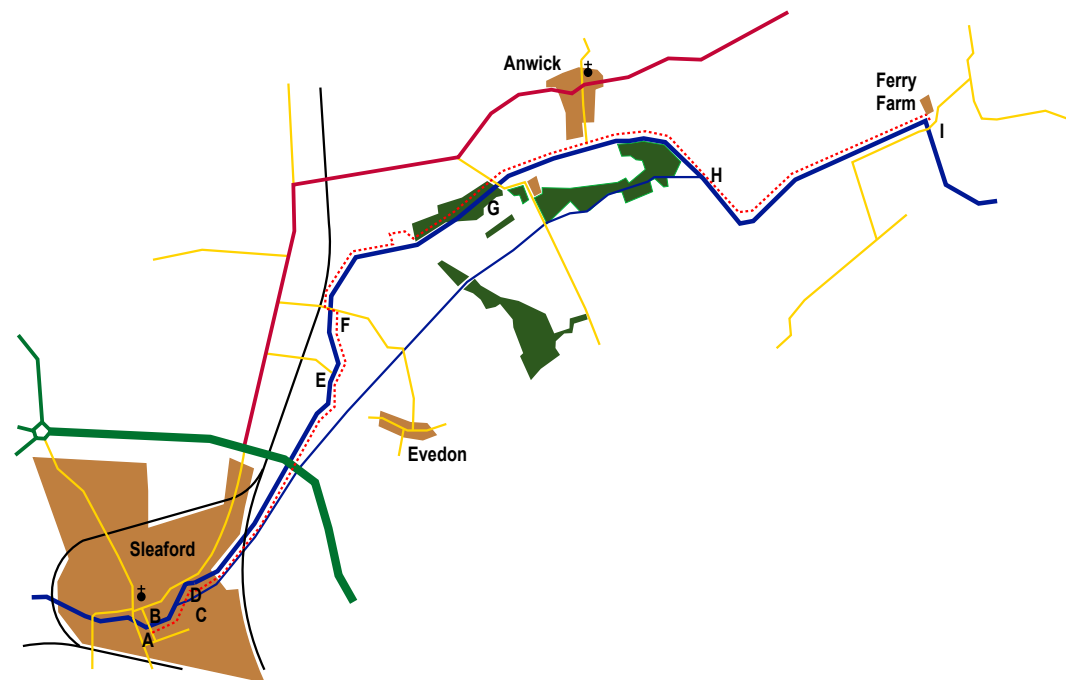
Note, Moneys Yard is a short stay car park, so use the one in East Gate, which has a footbridge over the navigation giving access to Moneys Yard via East Banks and Carre Street. There is limited roadside parking at Ferry Bridge.

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

### ROUTE INSTRUCTIONS.

(1) Before setting off go to the Carre Street vehicle entrance of Moneys Yard and look leftwards to see the Navigation Wharf gateway. Navigation House stands in the renovation area behind it, along with “The Hub” and the restored Navigation Warehouse. Then turn right where you can view a remaining section of the “turnaround” cut near the Lincolnshire Echo office before crossing Carre Street and proceeding along East Banks. On your way you will have a fine view of “The Hub” on the old wharf. You will also pass the mosaics and the swimming pool. A run-off weir nearby marks the departing course of the Old River Slea. On the opposite bank is the nature reserve of Lollycocks Field. We then reach Cogglesford Mill.

(2) Continue beside the navigation to pass under the railway and reach the bypass at Bone Mill Bridge, site of another mill and of a former lock. A pathway is provided beneath the road and a further half a mile brings you to the navigation’s third lock at Holdingham Mill.



(3) The towpath now continues to Papermill Lock and Papermill Lane. Here walkers must cross the navigation to continue along the permissive path on the opposite bank with extensive views towards Haverholme Priory ahead. In a further half a mile the path briefly leaves the navigation. Turn left by a hedge to meet a lane and there turn right a few yards before going left of a garden fence to regain the towpath and walk past Haverholme Lock to Haverholme Bridge.

(4) Cross the road to continue. In half a mile a lane leaves on the left for Anwick, with the spire of St. Edith’s peeping above the trees, where there is a village PO-cum-stores. A final two and a half miles then leads on past Cobblers Lock, where the Old River Slea rejoins the navigation, and Appletreeness. On nearing Ferry Bridge stay close to the water and pass through the grounds of Ferry Farm House onto the road and turn right onto the bridge.