



SLEAFORD NAVIGATION NEWS

SUMMER 1997

EDITOR'S NOTE

First of all I must apologise for a very much delayed Spring News Letter. There has been much work going on behind the scenes and as there are only a limited number of hours in the day inevitably some things get put on to the back burner. This newsletter is, therefore, somewhat of a bumper edition. I have tried to include a number of items, not just of local interest but of more national significance to the waterways movement in general.

SLEAFORD NAVIGATION TRUST

We are delighted to say that the new Trust is up and running, but it has one strange feature. At the moment it has only a very limited membership. The reason for this is that when the Sleaford Navigation Society was disbanded, so was the membership. The solution is simple, as the time comes for members to pay their subscriptions then they can fill in a form which is an application to join the new Trust. All the life members of Sleaford Navigation Society will have their membership transferred.

COVENANTS

No this is not a biblical item! A new way of paying your membership is now available. The way it works is that you pay your membership as normal but agree to do so on a bank standing order for at least four years. This then means that the Trust will be able to reclaim the tax that you have paid. The pound in our pocket will definitely be worth more. You will find the new covenant form enclosed with this news letter so please consider this as it will be very advantageous to us.

CANAL BOAT & INLAND WATERWAYS

Many of you will have already seen the new waterways publication 'Canalboat and Inland Waterways'. As a promotional enterprise the publishers have contacted the relevant societies and trusts and asked them to include leaflets with their newsletters or magazines. If, as a result, society or trust members subscribe to the magazine for a year, then the publishers will donate £5 per subscription to the society or trust. Details are on the enclosed leaflet. If you do decide to subscribe, please don't forget to write the name of Sleaford Navigation Trust in the appropriate slot!

NAVIGATION WHARF

As many members may know, the Trust is actively involved with NKDC, as part of the "Sleaford Pride" project, in the regeneration of Navigation Yard. The main thrust of our involvement is in the restoration of Navigation House and the establishing of a museum/ visitor centre. The potential of this development is tremendous and the restoration of Navigation House itself was one of the first stated aims of the Society at its outset.

Unfortunately the current plans by NKDC do not include the restoration of the original warehouse, the white painted building within the yard. At the moment plans are to demolish the 200yr old structure which once housed the loading and unloading of boats on the Slea.

The Trust has written to NKDC expressing their concern over the fate of the warehouse and objecting to that part of the plans.

HELP!!

As the Trust gets involved with an ever wider range of activities all the work seems to fall on the same shoulders and the Committee would like to ask members, via this newsletter, if they feel able to help in any way could they please make themselves known. Assistance is needed in many ways, by helping to man a sales stall at events or by talking to the public about items on the display boards. Offers of help to fold newsletters and address the envelopes would be appreciated. If, however, your taste is for more active work then that also can be accommodated. If you do feel that you could offer help of any kind, in whatever capacity, please get in touch!!

SLEAFORD RUGBY CLUB

We were particularly pleased to receive an offer of help and partnership recently from Sleaford Rugby Club.

As part of new developments that are taking place in Sleaford a new industrial estate

will be built. An unfortunate effect of this will be that the Rugby Club will lose its existing ground. Part of the compensation package, however, will provide them with a new site for the club and they are putting in a bid to the Sports Lottery Fund to enable them to build the new facilities. The Trust were delighted to be asked to become one of the partners of the new enterprise.

This will potentially provide the Trust with a meeting place, accommodation for work camps and storage facilities for equipment.

We wish the enterprise every success and will keep our membership informed of any developments.

SLEAFORD FANFARE WATER WEEKEND, 24th and 25th May.

The Water Weekend provided a forcible reminder of the importance of the waterway to residents of and visitors to Sleaford. For two days a wide variety of activities concentrated attention on the Sleas and the riverbank. A number of craft and charity stalls, including that of the Sleaford Navigation Trust, were positioned at Cogglesford Mill and Riverside Green and the focus was clearly on water. Potential young recruits for WRG could have a go at bricklaying, painted ware was on sale, R & D Fabrications brought a narrowboat to the car park for visitors to look round, there were model boats and even a remote control duck! I'm not too sure what Rosie and Jim would have made of that!

For some it was an opportunity to get on to or into the water. We were delighted to be visited by David Garrick with his steam launch Firecrest. Stranger craft took to the water on Sunday with the raft race! First home to Cogglesford from Eastgate Car Park was the Sleaford Navigation raft paddled by Rebecca Hayes and David Osbourne, triumphant and not even very damp! Last home was the second Sleaford Navigation raft, somewhat ignominiously towed by Firecrest and hence disqualified! This crew, including Steve and David Hayes were exceedingly wet and dirty having had close encounters with the bed of the Sleas. Was there really enough water to be wet up to chest level?

Mikron Theatre Company presented their revised production of "Just the Job!" in the marquee on Saturday evening and the tent provided a venue for live music throughout the weekend.

It was wonderful to be visited on the Navigation stall by so many well-wishers, many of whom bought raffle tickets or goods. Without exception people were fully in support of the aims of the Trust to restore navigation to Sleaford and had a keen understanding of the impact that would have on the town. To many it was a surprise to realise the extent of the inland waterways network but all united in the desire to see the lock at Cogglesford in operation and to see boats in the town. We do have moral support but hope that more people will now come forward to join the Trust.

RESTORATION ROUND-UP

In this section we will try to bring you information of the restoration scene both local and national.

SLEA WATER RETENTION STUDY

Jubilee Court to Cogglesford Lock Section (Upper Pound)

Part of the Sleaford Pride Single Regeneration Bid(SRB) programme includes a study into the work needed to retain water and restore the river for navigation above Cogglesford Lock. The Study has been carried out by Sir William Halcrow & Partner Ltd. and is now in the final draft stages. This update therefore only indicates the general findings, and these are subject to further detailed discussions with both North Kesteven District Council(NKDC) and the Environment Agency(EA). The main points to emerge are as follows:-

Although the Trust had calculated a very approximate cost for lining the bed of the river over this section, based on the previous Binnie & Partners feasibility report, the Halcrow study has concluded that the original natural clay subsoil forming the bed of the river, over this section, actually has very little leakage. This is good news in that the costs and environmental impact of putting in an artificial bed lining, as costed by Binnie & Partners were significant, particularly in this very pleasant, and widely visited stretch of the river.

The present arrangement, whereby a very small amount of any flood water is discharged down the Old Slea through a small orifice near the Swimming Pool, can be altered to allow much more flood water to by-pass the locks all the way down to below Cobblers Lock. This will allow the Trust to re-calculate the cost of lock restoration and by-pass weirs, at not only Cogglesford but all the other locks down to Haverholme, compared to the Binnie estimates.

The embankments above Cogglesford have settled considerably since the river was last navigable. This means that there is some work to do in order to restore the water level to navigable depths. Restoring the banks completely to their estimated previous height is not feasible due to the environmental impact this would have on the area, and the established footpaths, and Lollycocks Field in particular.

In order to achieve a minimum acceptable navigational water depth it will be necessary to fully dredge the river and, at the top end near Jubilee Court and Riverside Green, the clay lining will need to be removed, the hard bed made deeper and the clay replaced. There is a risk that this work will actually damage the bed and

cause leakage. For this reason the work will need to be carefully controlled and will require dry working. Not a big problem given the present water flow levels in the Slea, just rescue the fish and turn the tap off ! However, the need to do the work quickly and, with the flow minimised and diverted, may mean that using volunteer work camps, e.g. Waterway Recovery Group etc. may be impractical for this specific part of the work.

The Halcrow study also emphasises the need to address the continuing problem of insufficient water supply for navigation, which is especially severe again this year (as it is in many parts of the UK), and the limited pumping that EA are able to do just to maintain a level of water through Sleaford town centre.

Full restoration costs, at full professional rates, for this section have been included in the Halcrow study. This includes the work described above plus these additional significant items; a replacement lifting or swing bridge at Jubilee Court; a turning point and small mooring basin at Riverside Green; and a new weir into the Old Slea. The full cost is estimated at £218, 628. However, apart from the bed dredging work, much of this could be done by volunteer groups at very much lower costs.

Overall the Halcrow study has greatly clarified the work needed to get boats moving again in Sleaford, and the Trust working closely with NKDC on the SRB programme in Sleaford is increasing public awareness of the Slea's potential and successfully increasing our profile in the town.

RIBBLE LINK TO GO AHEAD

It was recently announced that a grant of £2.7million would be made by the Millennium Commission towards the £5.4 million project to construct the Ribble Link. This proposed new navigation will follow the line of Savick Brook, a tributary of the River Ribble. The new waterway will connect the currently isolated Lancaster Canal to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and the national waterway network via the Rivers Ribble and Douglas.

The project has been promoted since 1984 when the Ribble Link Trust was formed and the announcement is the culmination of many months of planning, campaigning, fundraising and negotiation with local authorities. The project has been strongly supported since its inception by the IWA, which appoints nominees to the Trust's board of management and in 1996, IWA's Waterway Recovery Group held two weeks of Canal Camps to build a new bridge over the line of the proposed new navigation.

Creation of the Ribble Link will require the construction of new locks, bridges and other structures as well as the realignment of service pipes, etc.. The route of the new

navigation will run for about 4.5 miles from near bridge 15 on the Lancaster Canal to the point where Savick Brook currently enters the River Ribble. Construction should be complete and the new waterway opened in about 4 years time.

The original plans for the Lancaster Canal intended it to be constructed from Wigan to Kendal with aqueducts over the rivers Lune and Ribble. The sections from Wigan to Walton Summit (near Preston) and from Preston to Kendal (including the Lune aqueduct) were eventually built but then the money ran out. The southern length from Wigan to Whittle-le-Woods became part of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and from Whittle-le-Woods to Walton Summit, a branch of that canal. A horse-drawn tramway connected the canal from Preston to Walton Summit, but the intended Ribble aqueduct was never built. The tramway was closed in 1879 and the northern Lancaster Canal has been isolated since then. The northern part of the Lancaster Canal, above Tewitfield was closed in 1955 and the M6 motorway subsequently blocked the canal line; this section of the canal is the subject of separate restoration proposals.

LARGEST RESTORATION LOTTERY AWARD

Even more recently there was an announcement of a grant of £ 32m by the Millennium Commission which, in partnership with other funding, will complete the restoration of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals through the lowlands of central Scotland.

In four years 70 miles of wide beam waterways will be opened from sea to sea with a striking new feature - the Antonine Wheel - transferring boats between the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals in place of 11 abandoned locks at Falkirk. The radical new structure, which will use an energy efficient system based on ancient waterwheel technology, will be a major tourist attraction in its own right, rivalling other wonders of the waterways in years to come.

The Forth & Clyde Canal was closed on 11th January 1963 largely to avoid the provision of a navigable culvert and save on road building costs. The locks connecting the two canals at Falkirk were closed in 1936 and subsequently filled in. The Union Canal then gradually deteriorated. Both waterways suffered considerably from misguided calls to have them filled in so as to prevent children falling in and drowning. Public perceptions began to change during the 1970s and calls for restoration combined with volunteer work-parties eventually led to official backing for the restoration of both waterways.

The I.W.A.A.C. Report

Many members of the Trust especially those with boats will have heard of IWAAC but most will have only a hazy appreciation of its function. Its long awaited report, however, was the most important development to hit the waterways scene during 1996.

The Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council was set up under the 1968 Transport Act to advise the Secretary of State for the Environment and the British Waterways Board on a range of matters affecting the use and development of the Boards waterways for recreation and amenity purposes.

In 1993 the then Minister invited IWAAC to undertake a strategic long-term review of inland waterway navigations. The recently published report is the result of that review.

In undertaking its review IWAAC believed that to consider the British Waterways navigations in isolation would create a false picture and so it has looked at recreational navigations as a whole. This is tied to its response to the recent Review of Navigation Functions conducted by the Government when IWAAC advocated closer ties between and eventual amalgamation of the public sector navigation authorities.

In July 1995 the IWAAC report was submitted to Mr. Robert Atkins MP, Minister for the Environment and Countryside, at the Department of the Environment. At the request of IWAAC it was subsequently put out to public consultation with comments and suggestions returned preferably by 31 August 1996. Sleaford Navigation Society was on the list of consultees.

The full report is a 48 page document the importance of which is that it advocates much that waterways enthusiasts have been saying for years. There is little if anything in the report that navigation enthusiasts or boaters could take issue with. It contains a call for action on 3 broad and inter-related fronts:

- 1 a higher status for our waterways at international, national and local level so as to promote
- 2 more money coming into the system in order to preserve
- 3 its long-term value by shaping development and uses to conservation-based objectives through sustainable partnership management.

There are some 31 conclusions and a similar number of recommendations. Many of these affect the Sleaf in varying degrees but the most interesting are;

No.13 The Department of Transport should implement new criteria to conserve navigation routes currently out of use,

No.14 Grant funding for waterway restoration should be developed and linked to viable on-going maintenance and management schemes,

No.22 Waterways should be a focus for rural regeneration,

No.29 Current funding criteria operated by external sources should be reviewed to reflect the importance and potential of the waterways.

WHITE HORSE INN

Our thanks go to Jackie and Barrie Darling of the White Horse Inn, Dunston Fen for a donation to the Trust's funds and thereby, unknowingly, sponsored this edition of the newsletter.

The White Horse Inn is a good place to go for a drink or a meal. It is in a peaceful setting by the River Witham and is accessible by boat and car. If going by car, don't give up, the road may seem long but it's worth it in the end! If you are in a boat the moorings are excellent but popular. There is also a caravan park with spaces for touring tents and caravans. Telephone 01526 398341 for further details.

[This is, I may add, a personal recommendation! Mooring there at Easter on our way to Bottom Lock to 'spring clean', we were introduced to a practice originating in Oxfordshire called 'jarping'. This involved striking hard boiled eggs together in a manner similar to that of conkers. Very interesting!]