



# SLEAFORD NAVIGATION NEWS

## SUMMER 1998

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The first Annual General Meeting of the new Sleaford Navigation Trust will be held on Tuesday, July 7th at The Lion Hotel, Sleaford, starting at 7.30pm. It is hoped that the AGM will be followed by an illustrated talk by Michael and Carole Golds. Please make a note in your diary and remember that this will be an ideal opportunity to apply for membership of the Trust following the cessation of the Sleaford Navigation Society.

### WORKING PARTY REPORT

Over the last couple of years the Trust has organised merely a handful of working parties as developments have tended to be in other areas than actual physical work. Work at Cobblers lock came to an end with the completion of the main chamber restoration organised by Neil Evans and David Pullen and the only work since then has been the clear up at Cogglesford lock and the annual work parties associated with putting the weir boards on and taking them off again at Bottom lock.

Your directors have now decided that it is high time this situation is changed and that work parties become a regular feature of SNT life. It is proposed that working parties are restarted from this autumn with work scheduled at both Bottom and Cobblers locks. However, the more exciting news is that plans are now being put together for major structural repairs to Haverholme lock. Haverholme, as we discovered recently, has passed into the ownership of North Kesteven District Council and it is hoped that an agreement can be worked out whereby the Trust can take charge of the lock and organise its restoration.

The next stage at Haverholme will be a complete engineering assessment of the work needed and costings along with an appraisal of the tasks that can be completed by voluntary labour. Lionel Rudkin has agreed to undertake the initial engineering survey which we hope can be completed during the summer but has been delayed so

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far this year by, of all things on the Slea, excess water in the river. Watch this space. In the mean time Steve Hayes is compiling a list of all those who might be interested in attending one or more working parties and would appreciate a ring (evenings) on 01522 689460.

David Turner

## A NEW NAVIGATION AUTHORITY ?

One of the main questions for any group wishing to reinstate a long lost navigation such as the Slea is - who will manage it when the work of restoration has been completed? There are several possible answers but no volunteers. For many years the Sleaford Navigation Society avoided answering this question and was often, incorrectly, assumed to be the Navigation Authority. With the Millennium application the problem had to be faced as, with any major funding initiative these days, the Millennium Commission made a thorough examination of all aspects of the project.

Two of the possibilities looked at and dismissed were management by the Environment Agency and the District Council. Neither organisation has the resources to undertake the task or feels that it is the right organisation for the job. We soon discovered that the only sure way of finding an authority is to set one up ourselves and this is partly why the Society was reformed as the Trust. In order to become the navigation authority and so be able to enforce licences charges, should we wish to do so, and to impose bylaws either an Act of Parliament or a Ministerial order under the Transport and Works legislation is required. Neither would be easy or cheap to acquire - Leicestershire County Council has recently spent £50,000 on drafting an order under the Transport and Works Act in connection with the proposed extension of the Ashby canal. Let's think of it as light at the end of the tunnel !

Another possibility is for British Waterways to take on the task. Given certain conditions they at least feel able to do the job, but here again there are two major problems. The first is the usual lack of money with which to fund maintenance given that canals and river navigations rarely earn enough from boat licences and tolls. The second is the absence in BW's primary legislation of any authority to establish a new navigation. The first problem is also something that concerns the Trust and the only realistic solution so far put forward is for a marina or moorings to be established near to Sleaford which can be used to generate additional income for the Trust (or BW). The second problem means that as a navigation authority we can think of BW only in terms of a possible successor to the Trust, a possibility for the future only.

David Turner

The following two items have been adapted from the press releases and communications of the Inland Waterways Association because of their general interest and potential relevance to the Slea.

## The Waterways at risk.

The IWA has issued a strong warning to the Government to reconsider plans to franchise for the management of canals currently run by British Waterways, along similar lines to the controversial plans which have been earmarked for the London Underground. IWA understands that, in a bid to further reduce the Government's responsibility towards the country's waterways, the Treasury has been promoting this option in opposition to other plans to revitalise BW. The association is concerned that such a move would be extremely damaging for the national waterway network, with lesser used canals falling into disrepair and dereliction through a lack of funds for maintenance.

IWA Chairman, Audrey Smith, has written an urgent letter to Angela Eagle, the Waterways Minister, expressing the Association's concern and outlining the possible repercussions of such a move. Mrs Smith has made it clear that the Association will strongly resist these proposals, which it regards as a serious threat to the future of the waterways.

## Easter Flooding

The IWA recently called for the Government to provide funding to cash strapped navigation authorities for urgent repairs to waterway structures following the devastating floods which wreaked havoc during the Easter period.

Rivers reached their highest levels this century after prolonged rain in parts of Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. The resultant floods have caused damage to locks, weirs, moorings and other essential structures and it is likely that channels will contain large amounts of debris which will prove hazardous to navigation as the waters recede.

Repair costs, which are increasing daily, will have to take precedence over planned maintenance expenditure for which budgets are already severely stretched.

The Lower Avon was one of the worst affected of all navigations, with river levels being the highest ever recorded. Many boats sank on their moorings and there was considerable damage to local property, including waterside businesses. A large number of boats were washed into adjacent fields and, as the waters receded, the unfortunate ones came to rest against trees, hedges and built structures causing considerable damage.

River levels on the Upper Avon also reached record levels in Stratford-upon-Avon with considerable flooding in the town.

Some local damage was sustained with two boats sinking in Lincoln and another stranded on the banks of the River Witham at Southrey.

Water levels on the Slea have been so high that notices have been placed by the Trust at Torksey, Lincoln and Bardney, warning would be navigators of very low headroom under the bridges, particularly Halfpenny Hatch.

## SLEAFORD WATER DAY

A second successful Water Day was held in Sleaford over the Bank Holiday Weekend. A Fanfare Event, the programme was organised by a Committee with Martin Chapman and Barbara MacKay representing the Trust.

The many hours of planning and preparation time were rewarded by a highly successful and well supported three days which concentrated on making local residents and visitors alike aware of the river and riverbank as a leisure amenity. Some of the visitors had close contact with the water then others! There was the opportunity to sample canoeing for the first time for some and perhaps a rather more primitive hands on approach from those competing in the raft race!

Trust members worked hard to promote the aims of the Trust by explaining the plans, achievements and objectives to visitors. It is always gratifying in that situation to feel that so many people in Sleaford and surrounding areas are aware of the benefits that a restored navigation would bring. The overwhelming feeling is one of support from the local population and we were delighted too to welcome several new members over the three days.

## FUTURE PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Trust members will be manning sales and promotional stalls at other local events in the near future. At RAF Waddington Open Days on Saturday and Sunday, June 27th and 28th, there will be a Navigation Trust stand in the Charities Hangar and there will also be a Trust display and Friends of Sleaford Navigation sales stand at the Lincoln Water Festival on Saturday and Sunday, July 11th and 12th. We should be pleased to see any members who come along to these two events and delighted to hear from anyone who felt able to help at such events in the future. Revenue from the stall is important for the Friends of Sleaford Navigation but it is also important that we take opportunities to raise awareness in the local community.