

Sleaford Riverside Heritage Trail



The River Slea was once a very important river

The Domesday Book recorded 18 watermills on the River Slea, most of them clustered around Sleaford itself.

In 1794, the river east of Sleaford became a navigable waterway, the Sleaford Navigation, linking Sleaford to the River Witham and the English waterway network that was so vital in the early industrial revolution.

This walk takes you on a circular route along a section of the River Slea to the east of Sleaford, with Navigation House and Cogglesford Watermill as its start and finish.

Both are managed by North Kesteven District Council, containing fascinating displays and information about the buildings' roles within the town's history.

You can begin the walk either at Navigation House (following first the southern [S] waypoints or at Cogglesford Watermill (following first the northern [N] waypoints).

In either case, the route will take you back to your starting point. The full walk is a mile long, but remember to allow some extra time to explore Navigation House and Cogglesford Watermill when they are open.



Discover the walk and the history along the way step by step



S1. Navigation House

S2. Navigation Wharf

This wharf was originally the terminus of the Sleaford Navigation. Quayside House on the right (now Sleaford Town Hall) was rebuilt in 1999 with the original materials and on the original footprint of the late eighteenth century Navigation Warehouse. Goods shipped on the Navigation were stored here to await collection or dispatch. There was a dock that ran along the eastern side of the building, so that vessels could be loaded or unloaded.

Walk past the National Centre for Craft and Design and cross the footbridge into the outdoor seating area of the Barge and Bottle.

S3. Wharfside Mews

This area was bought in 1831 by the builder Charles Kirk, who used it as part of his timber yard before leasing it in about 1840 to John Parker, coach maker, the first of a succession of coach and carriage makers who established their factories and showrooms in this part of Carre Street. Parker was succeeded by Fox Brothers in 1871. Part of their coach works is now the Wharfside Mews building.



Walk past the seating area and the "Wharfside Mews" sign into Carre Street, turning left past the front of Berkeley Court. On the opposite side of the road you will see an archway leading into Money's Yard.

S4. Carre Place Rooms (archway to Money's Yard)

Like the Navigation Warehouse, this building was dismantled and rebuilt in 1985 but it was reduced from two storeys to just the ground floor and the main reminder of its previous existence is the coach arch in the centre, which now provides pedestrian access to Money's Yard car park. It was originally built as the Carre Place Rooms in about 1840 by the merchant and entrepreneur John Payne junior (1808 – 1882), who developed much of this part of Carre Street. He intended it to be a general purpose meeting venue and assembly room for the town, but by 1849 it had been completely taken over by the Sleaford Literary Institute, who used it as a library and lecture hall. At a later date it became successively part of the Carre Street coach works complex, a drill hall for the volunteer battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment and a seed warehouse.

S5. Bridge

The present brick bridge (near the pedestrian crossing) was built in 1884 to replace a swing bridge of 1833, constructed at the expense of the private proprietors of The Cut (see S8 below) so that Humber keels could pass through it to the modern Money's Yard. The swing bridge was maintained (very badly) by the parish of New Sleaford because Carre Street had by then become an important thoroughfare.

Continue along Carre Street past the entrance to Handley Street on your right, towards the corner with Boston Road, pausing before the White Horse pub.

S6. Clover House

Just before the White Horse is a car park on the left leading to Clover House, a nineteenth century warehouse (now subdivided into a number of business premises). It was built by Charles Sharpe, whose seed business became internationally important. At the top of the gable closest to Carre Street are the initials "CS" and on the far one the date "1872".



S8. The Cut

The waterway on the left, known as The Cut, is now filled in. It was privately constructed in the 1790s to link with the Navigation and it originally ran from Canal Turn (where the modern metal sail sculpture stands) right around Money's Yard to link up with the River Slea near the present Citizens' Advice Bureau there. It was used to ship goods to Payne's Wharf (see S9 below) and was also used by the three breweries and the coal yard that operated in this area for much of the nineteenth century. It was already partly filled in by the 1830s but the last traces of it were only removed in the 1970s.

S9. Payne's Wharf

The area between Navigation Wharf and The Cut (now Berkeley Court, on the left) was developed in the middle of the nineteenth century by John Payne junior, first as a private wharf on The Cut to ship timber, grain, coal and agricultural products along the Navigation and later as an industrial area. By the 1870s there was a steam mill, an iron foundry and an aerated water factory on the wharf. After Payne died in the 1880s, the aerated water firm, Lee and Green, expanded their premises there and developed a thriving business manufacturing and selling non-alcoholic drinks to a staunchly Methodist and temperance-minded district. The factory continued operating until the 1930s.

Continue along East Banks to the point where The Cut and the Navigation meet.

S7. The White Horse

On the corner of Boston Road, the White Horse is one of the oldest landmarks in Carre Street, established in 1810. Before it was rebuilt in 1938, the previous building stood right on the corner, much closer to the line of both Boston Road and Carre Street, and the original junction with Boston Road was extremely narrow. On the opposite side of the junction, several old houses were demolished in the 1970s as part of a plan (never realised) to widen the whole street.



Walk back along Carre Street to the bridge, then turn right along East Banks.

S10. Roberts' Brewery



In the middle of the nineteenth century, East Banks was already a popular "public walk" for the people of Sleaford, despite the existence of a foul open

drain just to its right. Into this, much of the waste from Carre Street was discharged, along with the effluent from Boston Road Brewery (now the much-altered premises of Sleaford Medical Group). This brewery – one of several in this part of Sleaford - operated for most of the nineteenth century, first (from about 1828) under the ownership of Richard Roberts, then his widow Jemima (between 1836 and 1864) and finally her son, Richard. In 1902 the building was converted into Sleaford Steam Laundry, which used a combination of river water and rain water to generate its steam.

Continue along East Banks.

S11. New Street

The plots for the houses in New Street are shown laid out in a plan of Jemima Roberts' property when she died in 1864 but some of the houses were still being built twenty years later. The original footbridge joining New Street and Kesteven Street was built in 1962 but was replaced in 2008 by the present one, which can be opened to allow vessels to pass beyond it.

Continue along East Banks towards the large wooden footbridge outside the Leisure Centre.



S12. Leisure Centre

Although its modern appearance does not suggest it, the swimming pool at the heart of the Leisure Centre originated as an outdoor lido, the Bristol Baths, in 1886. The first baths here were largely the result of a long campaign by William Dentcliffe Owen, a Sleaford draper and member of the local authority, who wanted to provide an alternative to the practice of young men bathing in the river "which renders it at times almost impossible for females to walk along." It was rebuilt in 1937, a second outdoor pool for children was added in 1960 and it became a single indoor heated pool in 1981. The present centre was reopened after a £2.85 million refurbishment in 2013.



S13. Old River Slea Sluice

Just beyond the footbridge, a sluice gate marks the splitting of the river into two channels, the New Slea and the Old Slea. This is the point at which much of the sewage and waste water of Victorian Sleaford was discharged. Although the Old Slea (on the right) is now mainly used as an overflow channel for the New Slea, it was once the more significant of the two. The local parish boundaries run along the Old Slea and the original Iron Age and Roman settlements at Old Sleaford were founded on a ford across the river at this point.

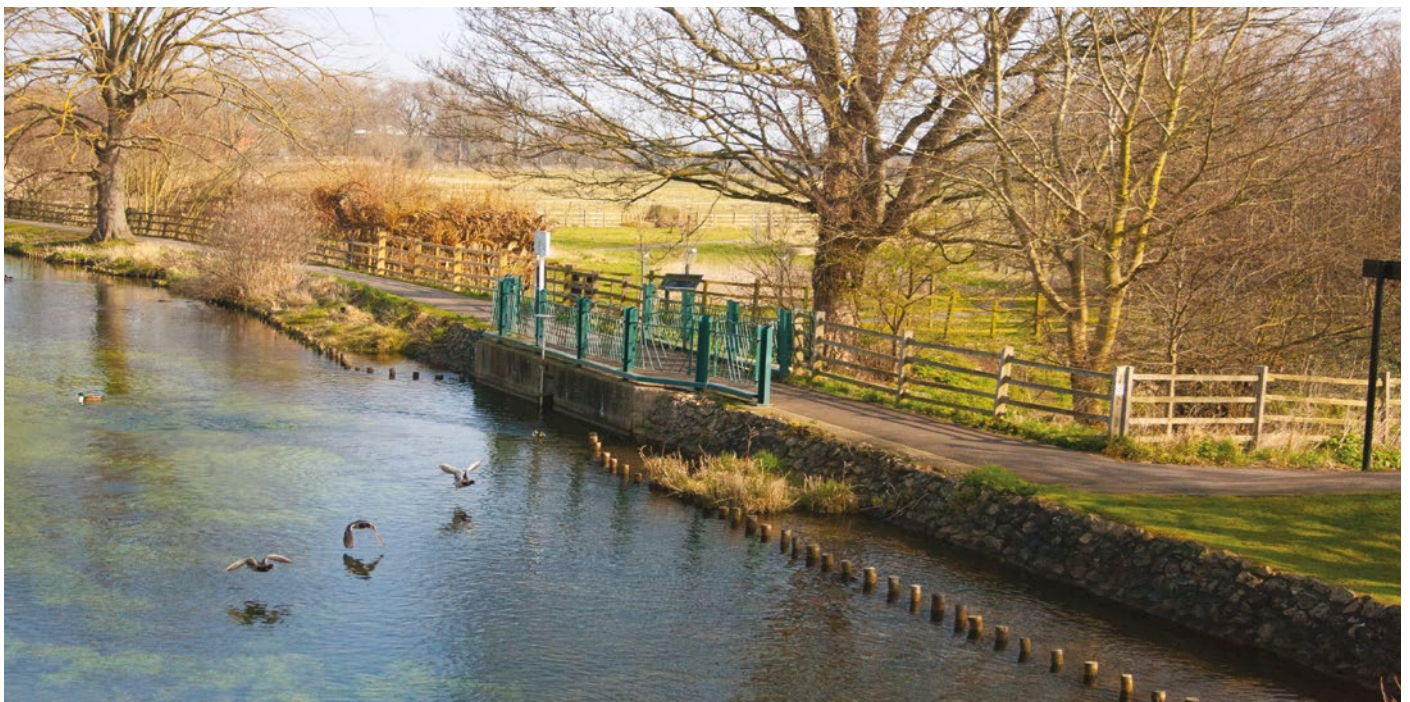
The New Slea was straightened and embanked when it was converted into the Sleaford Navigation in the 1790s but it is much older, being the site of a number of Anglo-Saxon watermills. It may have been dug in Anglo-Saxon times to function as a water supply for a series of such mills.

The Nettles nearby is a small green space for the arts created in 1998 from a former piece of waste land and is managed by artsNK and a local volunteer group.

Continue along East Banks for about five minutes until you reach a mill pond and the tilting weir (dated 1961). Turn left across the bridges over the lock and mill headrace to Cogglesford Watermill.

N1. Cogglesford Watermill

On leaving Cogglesford Watermill, go straight ahead past Cogglesford Watermill Car Park. Bear right where the path forks (not left along the river). Continue straight on into Lollycocks Field. Alternatively, you can bear right through the gate onto Eastgate and follow the trail along the path there, keeping Lollycocks Field on your left.



N2. Lollycocks Field

Lollycocks Field is now a 5½ acre nature reserve owned and managed by North Kesteven District Council. The most likely explanation of the name is that it was once used for farming turkeys (or lollycocks). Although not (as sometimes claimed) mentioned in Domesday Book, a field with this name is recorded as early as 1627, although at that time it contained just one acre and much of this original pasture was probably taken from the field in 1970 to divert and straighten Eastgate. By the eighteenth century, other nearby closes had been incorporated into it and the present field created. The pond was added in the 1980s.

From Eastgate, walk down the steps at the north-east end of Lollycocks Field and past another display board back into the field. Continue along the footpath and turn right into Lafford Terrace Car Park.

N4. Kesteven Street

The first police station in Sleaford (on the right hand side of Kesteven Street, opposite the main entrance to the council offices) was built in 1845 on the site of an old farmhouse, partly to provide jail facilities for Sleaford to replace previous accommodation in the Sessions House in the Market Place. Notice the word "Kesteven" above the doorway. It was largely rebuilt in 1912 and served as the town's police station until 1997.

Walk to the end of Kesteven Street and up the steps into Eastgate Car Park. Turn right towards the National Centre for Craft and Design, which will lead you to Navigation Wharf, then turn right to Navigation House (S1).

N3. Lafford Terrace

Lafford Terrace (ahead and a little to the right) is now council offices but it originated as the most impressive terrace of domestic housing in Sleaford, built in the Renaissance style in the middle of the nineteenth century by Kirk and Parry, the local builders and architects.

There were seven dwellings in the completed terrace. The three at the south end (nearest to the river) were completed first and were under construction in 1851, followed by No 1 (nearest to Eastgate) and then Nos 2-4 (the central section). All were completed by 1871.

Walk through the car park to Eastgate, then staying on the same side of the road go past the modern extension to the council offices and turn left into Kesteven Street.



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