

= Sleaford Navigation =

The Sleaford Navigation was a 12 @. @ 5 mile (20 @. @ 1 km) canalisation of the River Slea in Lincolnshire , England , which opened in 1794 . It ran from a junction with the River Witham , near Chapel Hill to the town of Sleaford through seven locks , most of which were adjacent to mills . Lack of finance meant that it stopped short of its intended terminus , but it gradually grew to be successful financially . The coming of the railways in 1857 led to a rapid decline , and it was officially abandoned by an act of Parliament in 1878 , but remained open for a further three years . The lower part of it remained navigable until the 1940s , when it was blocked by a sluice .

Interest in restoring the canal began in 1972 , and navigation was restored to the first 8 miles (13 km) with the re @-@ opening of Lower Kyme lock in 1986 . The Sleaford Navigation Trust has been working towards restoring the whole waterway , and succeeded in purchasing the Sleaford end of the river bed in 2004 . A short section at Sleaford was opened in 2010 , following the installation of a lift bridge .

Nearby , Navigation House , which served as the clerk 's office , has been restored as a visitor centre about the canal , and the adjacent seed warehouse has been turned into The National Centre for Craft & Design .

= = History = =

The River Slea rises to the west of Sleaford , near Ancaster , and flows in an easterly direction , passing through Sleaford on its way to South Kyme , beyond which it is called the Kyme Eau , joining the River Witham at Chapel Hill . Kyme Eau had been navigable since at least the reign of Edward III , for in 1375 Gilbert d 'Umframville was accused of illegally collecting tolls on boats carrying food products to the people of Kesteven . He had been doing so for 12 years , and he defended his case before the king , explaining that the river was navigable from Dog Dyke to Brent Fen , but that it suffered from silting and the banks were in a poor state of repair . Having agreed to carry out repairs , he was granted the right to levy tolls by letters patent .

With influential local landowners such as Sir Jenison Gordon of Haverholme Priory and Sir Christopher Whitchcote of Aswarby wanting to improve communications to the area , a proposal to link Sleaford by canal to Grantham was considered in 1774 , but was replaced by a scheme to provide a navigable link along the Slea and the Kyme Eau to the Witham in 1783 . Following a public meeting in Sleaford on 16 January , a committee was formed to promote the scheme , and in order for it to be profitable , negotiations began with the Commissioners of the River Witham , to reduce the tolls on that river for traffic to and from the Slea . Although initially rebuffed , the committee persisted , and the Commissioners eventually agreed to terms .

At the time , the River Slea was not navigable beyond Kyme , as the channel was inadequate , and there were fish weirs and water mills on its course . Three attempts were made to obtain an Act of Parliament to authorise improvements , but all were defeated . In 1791 , William Jessop and John Hudson were commissioned to prepare a new survey and plans . Jessop was a canal engineer of some repute , with experience of several navigations , including the River Trent at Newark , while Hudson was less well known , but had experience of canal building in eastern England and Yorkshire . Their report was published on 25 November 1791 , and estimated that the improvements would cost £ 9 @, @ 979 . The plans obtained the support of Sir Joseph Banks , a baronet who was a patron of the natural sciences , and had been the President of the Royal Society since 1778 . The fourth attempt to obtain an act of Parliament was successful , probably due to his influence .

The Act was passed on 11 June 1792 , creating The Company of Proprietors of the Sleaford Navigation , which was empowered to make and maintain a Navigation from Sleaford Castle Causeway , through the town of Sleaford , along the course of Sleaford Mill Stream and Kyme Eau , to the River Witham , at or near Chappel Hill . It had authority to raise £ 13 @, @ 000 in capital for the project , with an additional £ 6 @, @ 500 if necessary . Most of the money was raised within Lincolnshire , with half of the shares being bought by people living in Sleaford . Six proprietors were elected to serve on a committee , which expressed its thanks to Joseph Banks at its first meeting .

By the end of 1793 , £ 16 @, @ 000 had been raised to fund construction .

The Horncastle Canal was being constructed at the same time , and the two companies negotiated to find an engineer who would oversee both projects . They approached Henry Eastburn , but he did not accept , and so William Cawley from Mickle Trafford in Cheshire was appointed . Five locks were required to negotiate the mills , and there were additional locks at Lower Kyme and near Flax Dyke , in the parish of Ewerley . They were built as broad locks , 60 by 15 feet (18 @. @ 3 by 4 @. @ 6 m) , and the total fall from Sleaford was 42 feet (13 m) . Six contracts with a total value of £ 4 @, @ 000 , for the construction of locks and bridges , were awarded to John Dyson Sr. , who worked with Peter Tyler and John Langwith . Defects were reported with the lock at Haverholme in 1794 , and when the opening of the canal was announced , Dyson produced advertisements which stated that the canal would not open unless he was paid for the work he had carried out . The company responded that the only place to sort out such disagreements was in a law court , and the opening went ahead on 6 May 1794 . The enabling act specified that the terminus would be at Castle Causeway , from where it would follow the southern mill stream to pass through the south bridge , and then along the Sleaford millstream through Old Sleaford and New Sleaford . Financial difficulties meant that it stopped short of its intended terminus , and instead the company built a wharf to the east of what is now Carre Street in Sleaford .

= = = Operation = = =

Trade on the navigation was adequate , but the company was hampered by the overrun in the cost of construction . Dividends were paid to shareholders in 1795 , 1817 , 1818 and 1824 , but profits had improved by 1826 , and regular dividends were then paid . Between 1836 and 1856 , they ranged from five per cent to eight per cent . Rather than the proprietors collecting the tolls , they were let to toll collectors . In 1816 , John Keyworth paid £ 1 @, @ 010 for the privilege , while by 1839 , Joshua Bower had to pay £ 1 @, @ 590 . This practice ceased in 1851 , as receipts fell .

While the navigation prospered , there were plans to extend it . The first plan was for an extension to the west to Wilsford , suggested on 1827 . Six years later J. Rofe and his son revived the idea , first proposed in 1774 , for a 16 @- @ mile (26 km) link from Sleaford to Grantham . In the same year , a Sleaford trader attempted to get the navigation extended to its authorised terminus at Castle Causeway , but the company stated that at the time of construction , only £ 700 had been left for the final 500 yards (460 m) to the causeway , and as that would not have been enough , they had provided a suitable wharf at the present terminus . While none of these extensions were pursued , plans for the installation of a weighing machine on the wharf in 1837 escalated , and resulted in a residence for the clerk of the canal and a weighing office being built . A crane was installed in 1841 , but success was soon threatened by the coming of the railways .

= = = Decline = = =

A railway from Grantham to Sleaford opened in 1857 . This was extended to Boston in 1859 , and so offered direct competition to the navigation . The decline was rapid . Income fell from £ 981 in 1858 to £ 168 in 1868 , and the share price dropped from £ 40 to £ 10 between 1860 and 1863 . The company was trading at a loss by 1871 , and although an Act of Abandonment was obtained on 17 June 1878 , the navigation did not actually close until 14 May 1881 , which was also the date of the final meeting of the proprietors . The Act required the company to fill in the three locks nearest to Sleaford , but there were special provisions for the remaining structures . The next three were on a stretch of river bordered by land belonging to Haverholme Priory , and were to be put into good order and handed over to Murray Finch Hatton , earl of Winchilsea & Nottingham , who owned the Priory . He could then maintain or abandon them , but was required to construct sluices if he chose to abandon them . The final lock was to be handed over to the commissioners of the River Witham , once it was in good order , and they could remove the gates and fill in the lock if they chose to do so .

Although officially closed , both Finch Hatton and the Witham Commissioners chose to retain the

locks , and the lower 6 @.@ 5 miles (10 @.@ 5 km) of the navigation from Ewerby Waithe Common to the River Witham remained navigable until the 1940s . Lower Kyme lock was then replaced by a sluice , which prevented navigation until a lock was reinstated in 1986 .

= = Restoration = =

In 1972 , Ronald Russell produced the book Lost Canals of England and Wales , in which he had compiled details of 78 canals then considered to be derelict . This acted as a catalyst for several restoration schemes , including one for the Sleaford Navigation . This plan initially centred on the canal head in Sleaford , and promoted by the Sleaford Civic Society . On 4 November 1977 , the Sleaford Navigation Society was formed , with the wider aim of restoring navigation to the whole canal , and publishing research into other Lincolnshire navigations . The society managed to gain the support of the Anglian Water Authority for their plans in 1980 , which resulted in the restoration of the Kyme Eau lock , re @-@ opened in November 1986 . With the raising of a low footbridge and the construction of a winding hole at South Kyme , the first 8 miles (13 km) of the waterway were returned to navigation . In 1991 , work commenced on Cobblers lock , and was completed by 1994 , although it has not been fitted with gates as the banks of the section above it need strengthening before the water levels can be raised .

Funded by a Derelict Land Grant , the engineering consultants Binnies carried out a feasibility study in 1994 , which concluded that full restoration was possible . A new administrative structure for the project was created in 1997 , when the Sleaford Navigation Trust was formed , and the Navigation Society was disbanded . The Trust has continued to work on restoring the structures of the canal , campaigning successfully to prevent the Navigation Warehouse from being demolished in 1998 . The local council organised funding for the restoration of the warehouse and the former offices of the canal company in 2002 , and Lincolnshire County Council funded a further study which looked at how to provide an adequate water supply for a re @-@ opened canal . The former seed warehouse now forms part of The Hub , housing the National Centre for Craft and Design , which is supported by the Arts Council and is one of the leading centres for the promotion and exhibition of international craft and design in the UK .

In 2004 , the Navigation Trust was able to buy the bed of the river between Carre Street in Sleaford and Bone Mill , which included the lock and its island at Cogglesford Mill . Lower Kyme lock was refurbished in the winter of 2008 . The upper gate is a vertical guillotine gate , and the mechanism required 350 turns of a handle to raise the gate , and another 350 to lower it again . New lock gates were fitted , and a new geared mechanism requiring fewer turns made the lock easier to operate . Around 0 @.@ 6 miles (0 @.@ 97 km) of the waterway from Sleaford to Cogglesford Mill lock were reopened , following the construction of a lifting bridge in the town centre . This was installed in late December 2008 , although the hydraulic operating gear was not fitted until January 2010 . Work was also carried out to construct a new slipway on Eastgate Green , to allow trailed boats to be launched onto the town section . This involved careful planning to avoid damage to 27 mature trees , and the widening of 92 feet (28 m) of the bank to create a mooring point . Funding was provided by Lincolnshire County Council , the Inland Waterways Association , and Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd (WREN) , which administers the Landfill Communities Fund . An official opening of the new bridge and facilities took place on 3 July 2010 , when three boats were launched from the slipway . Members from canoe clubs at Boston and Sleaford attended .

= = Course = =

The upper terminus of the canal was at Navigation Yard , near Sleaford town centre . Navigation House , the former residence of the clerk , is now a Grade II listed building , and has been refurbished . It houses an interpretation centre where visitors can learn of the history of the canal . The River Slea between Navigation Yard and Bone Mill lock is owned by the Canal Trust . A short distance below the terminus , a new steel lift bridge crosses the canal , after which a stream leaves the east bank . This is the old course of the river , which rejoins the canal below Cobblers lock . The

first lock is 0 @. @ 6 miles (0 @. @ 97 km) from Sleaford , and allowed boats to pass Coggesford Mill , an 18th @- @ century watermill which has been restored , and is still used to grind flour . It is managed by North Kesteven District Council . The railway line from Lincoln to Spalding crosses next , after which Dyers Mill or Bone Mill lock is reached , 1 @. @ 5 miles (2 @. @ 4 km) from Sleaford and overshadowed by the A17 Sleaford bypass bridge .

Corn Mill lock is situated 2 @. @ 4 miles (3 @. @ 9 km) from Sleaford , and the buildings of Holdingham Mill are Grade II listed . They include a small hexagonal toll house , which was used by the lock keeper . Next is Paper Mill lock , after which the canal follows a more easterly direction , to reach Haverholme lock after 3 @. @ 5 miles (5 @. @ 6 km) . Nearby was Haverholme Priory , founded by Gilbertine priors in 1139 . The Grade II listed ruins are of a much later date , being part of a Tudor style country house built in 1835 by H. E. Kendall . The bridge over the canal , built in 1893 , is also Grade II listed . At 4 @. @ 7 miles (7 @. @ 6 km) , Cobblers lock is reached , which has been the limit of navigation since 1986 . Just beyond it , there is a pumping station on the south bank and the canal make a right @- @ angle bend , to skirt Ewerby Waithe Common , after which there is another right angle bend by Ferry Farm , where Ferry Bridge now carries Ferry Lane over the canal . After a short distance , there is a bend called Heckington Tunnel , where a section of the Car Dyke , a Roman waterway which ran for 85 miles (137 km) , heads off in a southerly direction , with the Midfodder Drain running parallel to it .

Somewhere here , the name of the river changes from the Sleas to the Kyme Eau . The village of South Kyme follows , with its four @- @ storey fortified tower , built in the 14th century for Sir Gilbert d 'Umframville . It is 77 feet (23 m) high , and was surrounded by a moat . Two road bridges and a footbridge cross the navigation in the village . Damford Grounds , a low @- @ lying area of fenland , lies to the north of the village , and Damford Drain , the main drainage ditch , is pumped into the river by a pumping station on the west bank . After passing Terry Booth Farm on the east bank , the 18th century buildings of which are Grade II listed , and a farm with the same name on the west bank , Lower Kyme lock is reached , 10 @. @ 6 miles (17 @. @ 1 km) from Sleaford . The Twenty Foot Drain and its pumping station join the river as it makes another sharp turn to the east , to reach a set of flood doors and Chapel Hill bridge , beyond which is the River Witham , flowing south @- @ east to Boston .

= = Points of interest = =