



# Sleford Light Night 2009

## The Trail of Light - Script

### **The Hub**

First of all, you can start the tour at any point of course but we're assuming here that you're starting on the grassy area next to the Hub

The Hub itself - what an impressive building! As it says inside the door 'This used to be a seed warehouse, it still is' Home to craft and design exhibitions and workshops as well as the base for the artsNK team it's a hothouse of ideas.

Anyway moving on....the grass here is Eastgate Green looked after by Sleford Town Council it's a lovely spot for sitting out on a Summer's day

### **The River Sle**

Follow the path along the river until you get to the new bridge. Installed in 2008, this is the first real proof of the restoration of the navigation – one day you'll be able to take a boat down stream from here all the way the River Witham and from there to most of the UK's Inland Waterways network. Quite an ambition! The next stage is the installation of a slipway to allow trailable boats to be launched into the river. The bridge will be able to be lifted to allow passage of boats that need more headroom.

Take a right turn back along the southern bank of the river and up ahead you'll see the stainless steel sculpture by William Lasdun. This was installed in 2002 by the Civic Trust and ArtsNK to commemorate the masts of the barges that used to carry the grain and other goods along here, to and from Money's Mill and Navigation Wharf which we shall see later.

Berkeley Court, just over the river, was built on the site of an old bottling plant – can you guess the connection with the Pub Restaurant you may have seen earlier on Carre Street? Lee and Green, founded in 1881, used to bottle mineral water and apparently brewed its own Champion ginger beer which was said to have tasted similar to the best champagne, with sparkling effervescence.

The grassy area between the path and Berkeley Court was originally the line of the navigation which went into what is now Money's Yard (this was before Carre Street was built over it I hasten to add!). Rather than letting it become a stagnant mess, the Civic Trust took it on and transformed it into a water garden in the 1970s. Known as the Cut, the Trust still looks after it and the grass is cut by volunteers from Sleford in Bloom.



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### **Carre Street**

There's a zebra crossing to get you across Carre Street, turn to your left towards Boston Road, minding how you cross the end of Handley Street.

By the way, the terraced houses on Handley Street were allegedly built using reject and leftover bricks from the Bass Maltings construction. They are a tribute to the quality of the local building trade!

Carry on down Carre St and turn right along Boston Road. Keep going towards Southgate, the main shopping street.

### **Monument Garden Railings**

As you reach the end of Boston Road, look to the left and you'll see the Monument Garden Railings – controversial when they were installed in 2001, they are now loved by many residents and much admired by visitors. They were designed by local artist Richard Bett as part of the Sleford Pride regeneration project and were inspired by the Wyvern on the top of the building you're standing next to. To see the Wyvern on the roof, you might need to cross over – the best view is either from the gardens or outside the Nag's Head – but don't try it if there's traffic coming!

Look closely at the panels on the railings and see how many fish you can count. The panels represent the river and the planters along the top represent the cargos being carried on the navigation.

### **Handley Monument**

Now turn to the right and you will just see the Handley Monument. Henry Handley was MP for the town for 9 years in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and part of an influential local family, including the bankers for the original Sleford Navigation Company. Henry died in 1846, but members of his family still come back to Sleford from Canada to visit occasionally.

Going back to that Wyvern – he was one of the motifs used by Victorian builder architects, Kirk and Parry who were based in the town. We'll see another one later in the tour. They even built one into the design of St Pancras Station in London, although I've not seen that one!

Kirk and Parry were responsible for many buildings in the town – the one ahead of you, to the left of the Yorkshire Trading Company, is now part of the Kesteven and Sleford High School. Although they now use the front entrance on Jermyn St, many a young girl must have quaked her way through this front door on her first day at a new school!



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### **Southgate**

We're going to head up Southgate to Jermyn Street now, so set off in the same direction as the traffic flow. Ah yes our one-way system, source of many alternative theories of traffic management but it does cope well. Apparently there's as much traffic going through town these days as there was before the by-passes were first built! Imagine if all those heavy lorries had to come this way too!

### **Bull and Dog Pub**

Look out for the Bull and Dog Pub on the other side of the road – its sign built into the front of the building is supposed to be one of the oldest in the country and a unique example of one depicting the old sport of bull-baiting.

As we go through the town centre look out for Sleaford Pride street furniture – bollards, benches, bins and fingerposts. They depict the seed heritage of the town – spot the peas, sugar beet, ears of grain and the clover. Did you notice the upside-down pea-pod?

Now then we need to be down Jermyn Street next. That's just across the road, between Greggs and Thorntons. If there's no traffic that's ok, but otherwise keep going and use the Pelican Crossing to get across and then double back – it's only a few extra steps.

### **Jermyn Street**

So Jermyn Street – apparently named after a family member connected to Kirk and Parry. The Company had premises down here and the building straight on beyond the public car park is known as the Gatehouse. It now stands at the entrance to the High School that we mentioned earlier, and look, can you see what's sitting at the very top of the building?

Opposite is the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel one of the cornerstones of faith in Sleaford. It has close connections with Our Lady of Good Counsel Primary School in the north of Sleaford.

### **White Hart Mews**

Let's take a little detour now, through White Hart Mews back towards Southgate. Look out for the little shops hidden away here and the Kingfisher Café, as well as the White Hart itself with its impressive façade on Southgate.

Turn left now along Southgate and cross back over to the other side of Southgate at the Pelican crossing.



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### **Riverside Church**

Walking north we'll cross the river again, on the right you can look towards Carre Street, between Go-mobile and Wise Owl, before we find ourselves standing opposite the Riverside Church. The frontage here is quite new and has caused some controversy, but it has given the Church a great space for meetings and community activities. The café does a roaring trade and the building is also manned by volunteers late at night at weekends to help people in difficulty after sampling our night-time economy.

Those planters at the front have been provided by Sleaford Town Council and Sleaford BID; the ones on the lampposts are put up by Sleaford in Bloom.

### **Millstream Square**

To the right of the Church is the entrance to Millstream Square – a new development that includes a Thai restaurant, a butcher, gift shops and a hairdresser.

Keeping straight on now up Southgate there's another river crossing, to the left it's Riverside Precinct and to the right the river flows behind the wonderfully quaint 'Little Time House'

Just a minute, why are there two river crossings on Southgate when only one river seemed to come from that way when we were down by the Hub, and the other was a dead end?

The answer lies between the Southgate and Carre St – look on the map and see that the two that cross Southgate actually join up north of Money's Yard and become the one that passes the Hub!

### **Bristol Arcade**

Anyway back to the route... keep heading north, seeing on the right the entrance to Bristol Arcade built on the site of the Bristol Arms Hotel, an old coaching inn.

Next you'll get to Barclays Bank, then follow the path around to the right. See the wonderful Victorian Gothic architecture of the HSBC building across the road and the Sessions House building beyond the trees on the front of the Market Place. Guess who was responsible for the design and build of the Sessions House and that lovely covered water fountain at the front? Yes, Kirk and Parry.



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### **The Market Place**

Don't be fooled by the Tudor frontage above the café in the Market Place – it's genuine 1920s! The Vicarage, over at the far side of the Church, is however the real thing; it dates back to 15<sup>th</sup> century, although guess who added an extension in 1861 – yes Charles Kirk, of Kirk and Parry.

### **St Denys' Church**

St Denys', Sleaford's Parish Church, sits on the east side of the Market Place and dates back to around 1180. It has recently become the first provincial Church in the UK to have installed Photovoltaic panels to generate electricity, second only to St James' Church, Piccadilly, in London. The £56,000 project will save 4.5 tonnes of CO2 emissions and generate 900KW or £1,300 worth of electricity a year in an effort by the church to do its bit for the environment and cut out greenhouse gases. The Sleaford Standard reported this as 'Solar Power is heaven sent for Parish Church'

Markets have been held on the Market Place since the early part of that century and still happen here every Friday, Saturday and Monday.

### **Almshouses**

Keep walking towards the traffic lights at the junction of Carre Street and Eastgate. Straight ahead of you see the Carre's Hospital Almshouses, built in 1830 and 1844 by Charles Kirk of Kirk and Parry.

If you've timed it right, you might catch the performance here by Rhubarb Theatre! You might like to use the Pelican Crossing to get across for a better view.

### **Navigation Yard**

Afterwards, head down Carre Street until you see the entrance to Navigation Yard on the left. On your right hand side notice the row of buildings recently brought back into use – a beauty salon, a 2D art gallery, offices, Volunteer Centre and an Antiques Emporium have all made their homes here.

Crossing carefully into Navigation Yard, the old stable block has now been converted into units, homes to even more businesses, and on your right some Nottingham Community Housing Association flats.



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### Navigation House

Just past the stable units, Navigation House is on your left. You'll notice it's not quite straight – back in 1977, the owners of the site were trying to demolish the building as they felt it was an eyesore and dangerous. The Sleford Navigation Society was formed with an urgent mission to save the building even if it meant moving it to another location. Fortunately the building was granted Listed Building Status and in the late 1990s was shored up to prevent further collapse. As one of the final projects of Sleford Pride it was refurbished and opened as a heritage building with fascinating displays about the age of Navigation. Step inside for a trip back to the 1700s!

Sleford Navigation Society went on to become the Sleford Navigation Trust and now concentrates on restoring the navigation.

Across the way from Navigation House is the Sleford College building, another navigation warehouse, converted during Sleford Pride.

With the new craft workshops on the left we're on our way back to the Hub where we started.

Looking towards the bridge across to the Barge and Bottle, you'll see the area that was Navigation Wharf where grain would have been loaded on and off the boats.

If you're doing the trail on Light Night, this is where you'll find the craft market and after browsing awhile and finding lots of great items to buy, you'll now have a chance to go back into the Hub and enjoy some refreshments and another visit around the exhibitions.

Thank you for joining me on this trip around Sleford. I hope you've enjoyed it. We look forward to seeing you again.

If you'd like more information about the town and its surrounding area please do contact Sleford Tourist Information Centre on 01529 414294.

Sleford Light Night 2009 has been organised by Sleford Arts Festival Group with the help of ArtsNK, Leisure Connection, The Hub, Sleford Business Improvement District, Sleford Town Council, North Kesteven District Council, Awards for All, and Lincolnshire County Council.

[www.slefordartsfestival.co.uk](http://www.slefordartsfestival.co.uk)