



Sleaford Light Night

A Tale of the Trail

Welcome to the Sleaford Light Night Tale of the Trail audio guide designed to support your walk around historical Sleaford. As time taken to travel between each point will depend on the individual, we recommend that you pause and restart the audio guide to suit your pace.

- BERTY: Hello, hello, is it working? Marvellous, I'd like to introduce myself, Professor Bartholomew Doyle here. I've been asked in a professional capacity to guide you through some of the highlights of Sleaford. And as a revered historian my expert knowledge will of course...
- MAVIS: Bert, who are you talking to?
- BERTY: Quiet woman, I'm recording
- MAVIS: Recording what?
- BERTY: A grand historical tour of Sleaford
- MAVIS: A grand historical tour of Sleaford?
- BERTY: The audio guide Mavis, the audio guide
- MAVIS: Oh of course, well you better start at the Hub
- BERTY: Here we are at the Hub - what an impressive building! As it says inside the door it used to be a seed warehouse. And now it's home to craft and design exhibitions and workshops
- MAVIS: And the artsNK team.
- BERTY: Yes that too. Anyway moving on....the grass here is Eastgate Green looked after by Sleaford Town Council
- MAVIS: Oh it's a lovely spot for sitting out on a summer's day.
- BERTY: Follow the path along the river until you get to the new bridge. Installed in 2008, it's the first real proof of the restoration of the navigation
- MAVIS: I heard, that one day we'll be able to take a boat down stream from here all the way to the River Witham and further. That would be nice wouldn't it?
- BERTY: Look, are you doing this recording Mavis or am I?
- MAVIS: I won't say another word
- BERTY: Thank you, now where was I?

MAVIS: Navigation

BERTY: Navigation. The next stage is the installation of a slipway to allow trail-able boats to be launched into the river. 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. Installed in 2002 by the Civic Trust,

MAVIS: and ArtsNK

BERTY: to commemorate the masts of the barges that used to carry the grain and other goods along here,

MAVIS: to and from Money's Mill and Navigation Wharf

BERTY: which we shall see later.

MAVIS: Oh good. Where next Berty?

BERTY: Berkeley Court, just over the river, and built on the site of an old bottling plant. Founded in 1881, Lee and Green used to bottle mineral water. They even brewed their own champion ginger beer which was said to have tasted similar to the best champagne, with sparkling effervescence.

MAVIS: Well all I can say is they can't have tasted Tesco's best cava

BERTY: Errhum!

MAVIS: I'll go and make tea

BERTY: The grassy area between the path and Berkeley Court was originally the line of the navigation which merged into what is now Money's Yard

MAVIS: Was that before or after Carre Street was built over it dear?

BERTY: Before. Rather than letting it become a stagnant mess, the Civic Trust 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 Sleaford in Bloom

MAVIS: And a lovely job they make of it too

BERTY: What was that Mavis?

MAVIS: I said one lump or two

BERTY: To safely cross Carre Street, use the zebra crossing, turning left towards Boston Road

MAVIS: And be careful how you cross the end of Handley Street. By the way, the terraced houses on Handley Street were allegedly built using leftover bricks from the Bass Maltings construction.

BERTY: That's very interesting Mavis

MAVIS: Here's your tea then

BERTY: Thank you dear. You know Mavis, perhaps you might stay and help me out for a while?

MAVIS: Really? So are we carrying on down Carre Street, Berty?

BERTY: Yes, and turn right along Boston Road, then keep going towards Southgate, the main shopping street.

MAVIS: Yes but when you reach the end of Boston Road, do look to your left. You'll see

BERTY: the Monument Garden Railings, controversial when they were installed in 2001,

MAVIS: But we love them don't we. You must look closely at the panels on the railings, the sculpted fish and river and the planters along the top that represent the cargos being carried on the navigation.

BERTY: They were designed by local artist Richard Bett as part of the Sleaford Pride regeneration project and were inspired by the wyvern on the top of the building you're standing next to.

MAVIS: If you want to see the Wyvern on the roof, you'll need to cross over – the best view in my opinion is either from the gardens or outside the Nag's Head – but don't try it if there's traffic coming!

BERTY: Now turn to the right and you will just see the Handley Monument. Back in the 19th century, Henry Handley was Sleaford's MP for 9 years and part of an influential local family, including the bankers for the original Sleaford Navigation Company. Henry died in 1846

MAVIS: Did you know members of his family from Canada still come back to visit Sleaford occasionally.

BERTY: You are a treasure trove Mavis

MAVIS: You're quite a treasure yourself. I say, isn't there another Wyvern somewhere in Sleaford?

BERTY: Yes we'll see it later in the tour. It was one of the motifs used by Victorian builder architects, Kirk and Parry who were based in the town. The Wyvern is associated with Leicestershire, where Kirk and Parry originated from.

MAVIS: I think there's a Wyvern in one of the designs in St Pancras Station in London

BERTY: Mavis, I don't think we need to mention Wyvern's any more.

MAVIS: Oh I'm sorry; you were mentioning Pirk and Karry

BERTY: Kirk and Parry, yes, they were responsible for many buildings in the town – you should be able to see one ahead of you, to the left of the Yorkshire Trading Company, now part of the Kesteven and Sleaford High School.

MAVIS: I remember as a young girl nervously walking through that front door on my first day at the school!

BERTY: That was a long time ago

MAVIS: cheeky

BERTY: We're going to head up Southgate to Jermyn Street now, so set off in the same direction as the traffic flows.

MAVIS: Ah yes our one-way traffic system, that's a controversial subject. Mind you 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!

BERTY: 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.

MAVIS: Oh yes do look out for the peas, sugar beet, ears of grain and the clover. I wonder if they'll spot the upside-down pea-pod

BERTY: You should also look out for the Bull and Dog Pub – 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.

MAVIS: Ohh no, not to my taste. Where next?

BERTY: Just before the Bull and Dog take the little alley way on your left which will bring you out onto Jermyn Street. Kirk and Parry 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

MAVIS: and look up, can you see what's sitting at the very top of the building?

BERTY: 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.

MAVIS: What lovely children they have there too. Oh, can we take a little detour through White Hart Mews back towards Southgate. There are some lovely little shops hidden away here and the Kingfisher Café.

BERTY: And one ought to mention the White Hart itself with its impressive façade on Southgate.

MAVIS: Quite right. Where now?

BERTY: Turn left along Southgate and cross back over to the other side of Southgate at the Pelican crossing. Walking north we'll cross the river again, on the right you can look towards Carre Street, between...

MAVIS: Go-mobile and Wise Owl

BERTY: Thank you dear, before we find ourselves standing opposite the Riverside Church.

MAVIS: I love the new frontage; we have much more space for meetings and community activities now. And the café does a roaring trade. I was thinking of becoming one of the volunteers that stay late at night at weekends to help the community.

BERTY: Why late at night at the weekends?

MAVIS: Never mind dear. Now the 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

BERTY: 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.

MAVIS: sounds like the start of one of your jokes dear!

BERTY: Keeping straight on 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'

MAVIS: Why are there two river crossings on Southgate when only one river comes from the Hub, and the other is a dead end?

BERTY: If you look on the map between the Southgate and Carre Street you'll see that the two that cross Southgate actually join up north of Money's Yard and become the one that passes the Hub!

MAVIS: Ahhh, so back to the route

BERTY: Yes, keep heading north, you'll see to your right the entrance to Bristol Arcade built on the site of the Bristol Arms Hotel, an old coaching inn.

MAVIS: Then you come to Barclays Bank

BERTY: Then follow the path around to the right. Now let me draw your attention to 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.

MAVIS: Who was responsible for building the Sessions House and that lovely covered water fountain at the front?

BERTY: Charles Kirk of

MAVIS: Kirk and Parry.

BERTY: Although it was designed by London Architect, H E Kendall.

MAVIS: Well it's lovely to have some classic architecture around Sleaford, but don't be fooled by the Tudor frontage above the café in the Market Place – it's genuine 1920s!

BERTY: The Vicarage, over at the far side of the Church, is however the real thing; it dates back to the 15th century, although Charles Kirk, of Kirk and Parry added an extension in 1861.

MAVIS: The vicarage is said to be the oldest inhabited building in the town.

BERTY: Indeed. Now 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.

MAVIS: You read all that from The Sleaford Standard didn't you

BERTY: My research comes from many places.

MAVIS: Well, since we're in the market place we ought to mention that markets have been held here since the early part of that century and still happen every Friday, Saturday and Monday.

BERTY: 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.

MAVIS: Goodness, they get everywhere don't they?

BERTY: 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

MAVIS: Yes there's the beauty salon I visit

BERTY: The art gallery I visit

MAVIS: and the Antiques Emporium, we both like to visit

BERTY: Crossing carefully into Navigation Yard, the old stable block has now been converted in to units for businesses and just past these you'll see Navigation House on your left.

MAVIS: It's not quite straight is it?

BERTY: back in 1977, the owners of the site were trying to demolish the building as they felt it was an eyesore and dangerous.

MAVIS: Ah that's right. The Sleaford Navigation Society was formed with an urgent mission to save the building.

BERTY: 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 Sleaford 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!

MAVIS: The Sleaford Navigation Society went on to become the Sleaford Navigation Trust and now they concentrate on restoring the navigation.

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

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

BERTY: And finally, if you look 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.

MAVIS: Well I must say that was very interesting. I think I'd rather like to do the trip again sometime. Cup of tea Berty?

BERTY: I don't mind if I do. Wait a minute, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us on this trip around Sleaford. 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 Sleaford Tourist Information Centre on 01529 414294

MAVIS: Very good Berty

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