
The Newsletter of the Sleaford and District Civic Trust



A glorious summer day - and The Sessions House before the fire of 2025

Editor's comments

Welcome to the Summer edition of Civic Matters.

In this issue we have two feature articles - *'Edward Trollope 1817-1893'* from our regular contributor, Robert Turner, who has kindly given us print permission and *'Two refugees at the Ewerby Dower House'* from Mark.

Just occasionally, a fantastic opportunity comes along ...and this year we should celebrate the successful collaboration of The Hub and Sleaford Museum for putting together what promises to be an amazing exhibition entitled *'Common Ground - Sleaford's Shared Stories'*. Having received a significant grant from The Art Fund, this is a major project for the Museum and involves the dual-site exhibition between The Hub and the Museum. Mark shares the story behind this exhibition later in this newsletter.

We also have updates from Faith on the Blue Plaque project and from Laura Sutcliffe (NKDC) on the North Kesteven Heritage at Risk Survey ...and our regular articles including Faith's *'Ponderings'* which have reached a whole new level as she reflects on the closure and history of The Halifax in Sleaford.

Please check the *'future events'* section which carries us through to the end of a busy September and get some dates in your calendar.

I hope you enjoy the read.

Editor: Paul Hart

Chair's update

Sleaford Castle - We have no information as to when the work to tidy up the entrance is to be carried out. However, the Town Council has given approval "in principle" to work which will be completed in Phase 2 covering further archaeology in the Keep Area, work on the remaining 'above ground' Castle Wall corner and the development of an all important Site Maintenance plan for the future.

The Blue Plaque Project - The Roaring Bridge Blue Plaque has now been installed on the wall next to the bridge. Two more Blue Plaques are planned for this year including one to commemorate the life of Thomas Fawcett which will be mounted on the black doors leading to the land behind the Library. Please read Faith's article on the 8th Blue Plaque to be installed.

Sleaford's Listed Buildings - The Civic Trust was asked by NKDC to help them in a project surveying the Listed Buildings in the town and all local villages ...to identify, photograph, assess and record the condition of these Grade II listed buildings. There were three teams formed from mostly members of the Trust committee and virtually all of the 181 Grade II Listed Buildings in Sleaford have now been externally surveyed. Some are virtually unknown, some are in very good condition and others are in need of some care and attention. It was quite intense work and fun trying not to include the passing cars in the photographs!

The Almshouses - looked after by the Sleaford Hospital Trust Charity. The roofs have now been surveyed by a licenced drone company and a programme of work will be started to effect repairs keeping the roofs to the original designs.

The Mansion House - We reported in the last newsletter that the Trust has great concerns that the front of the Mansion House, which was Kirk's old home, is looking very neglected and shames this splendid building. From walking past recently, it would appear that NKDC have had some success in that the weeds and rubbish have now been tidied away. Hopefully the next step is to get some building repairs in hand.

The 2026 AGM - AGM's are necessary but never not popular. The AGM fulfils our legal requirements to provide the membership with oversight of the Trust's organisational and financial governance. As such, the AGM is a key meeting in our calendar. This year the Trust held the AGM as a standalone meeting. It was a successful event with all the executive officers and committee standing for another year. It was agreed to change the required number of members attending AGMs and EGMs to 10.

Civic Trust Special Event 2026 - The Civic Trust Special Event will be held on Thursday 24th September at The Source on Southgate. We will have the well-known Celebrity Auctioneer Colin Young come to give a talk and provide valuations on any "treasures" we bring along.

Heritage Open Days - A reminder that this year's Heritage Open days are on the 12th September for the Almshouse Chapel, and 19th of September for the Carres Family talk at St Deny's Church. Also the Museum will be open on both these dates. Publicity posters will be put up around town.

For general publicity we have arranged that the July edition of the Local Lincs Magazine will have an article on the Civic Trust and our activities.

David Marriage, Chair

Eighth Blue Plaque for the Town - Roaring Bridge

Sleaford Civic Trust has recently installed the eighth in the continuing series of Blue Plaques in Sleaford. This plaque is now in place near to the entrance to Roaring Bridge Lane which runs between Watergate and Westgate.



The Roaring Bridge Blue Plaque

Dr. Simon Pawley, who is involved in the project has written a short history about this area...

It's difficult now to imagine what Watergate and West Banks looked like before the River Slea was bridged at this point but the first bridge ("Roaring Bridge") was only constructed in around 1800. Before that, Watergate was a dead end. It took you down to the river but there was no way across to "The Tofts" (West Banks) beyond. The Tofts were just a series of low-lying fenland closes, mainly used for pasture and probably flooded regularly by the river to their north. Only when the modern streets off West Banks were developed in the years between 1845 and the First World War was the river put into the deep culvert that we see today, in an attempt to control it.

The name "Watergate" (or "Water Lane") is comparatively recent. On the north side of Roaring Bridge Lane, where Riverside Clinic now stands, was the site of Sleaford's medieval Common or Town Bakehouse and for centuries the road was known as "Bakehouse Lane".

Until it disappeared in the middle of the seventeenth century, the Common Bakehouse was where the bakers and other inhabitants of the town were supposed to come in order to use its large communal oven for baking bread. Because of the risk of fires, bakehouses were often placed away from other buildings and (as here) siting it close to a river was a sensible precaution. Like milling grain, common bakehouses were a manorial monopoly. If you lived in Sleaford, you were supposed to bake only at the common bakehouse and you could be fined for breaking the rules.

Behind the back of the old fire station building on the south side of Watergate was the Hurn Mill, one of Sleaford's five medieval watermills and one of two that stood within yards of each other in the centre of Sleaford. Its companion, the Malt Mill or Town Mill, is commemorated by another Civic Trust blue plaque on the side of Jennings Bookmakers, opposite the entrance to Costa Coffee. A "hurn" is a bend in a road or river, like the one the River Sleas takes at this point.

Even in the 1550s the Hurn Mill was described as "in great ruin and decay" and it disappeared completely at some time between the two surveys of Sleaford done in 1627 and 1692.

N.B. The next two Blue Plaques are already in the process of being produced and it is hoped that they will be in place during the next few months.

*Faith, Civic Trust Secretary
& Dr. Simon Pawley*

North Kesteven Heritage at Risk Survey

North Kesteven District Council's heritage at risk survey is now nearing completion, with over 950 listed buildings surveyed within the last nine months. The district-wide survey is on track to be completed by the end of June, with help from volunteers at the Sleaford Civic Trust. Members of the trust have completed surveys of listed buildings within the town centre, contributing almost 100 building surveys in total.

The project aims to complete condition surveys for all 1,017 listed buildings and monuments across the district and publish these results to better identify areas for improvement and investment and work proactively in collaboration with owners to establish plans for repair works and the restoration of historic buildings across North Kesteven.

*Laura Sutcliffe
Historic Environment Apprentice, NKDC*

I worked as a member of one of the Trust's three teams surveying properties in Sleaford. Harriott and I covered the buildings (all Grade II) on Watergate and Westgate (plus Westholme). We enjoyed warm blue-skied days on our two outings armed with clipboard, camera and our to-do list.

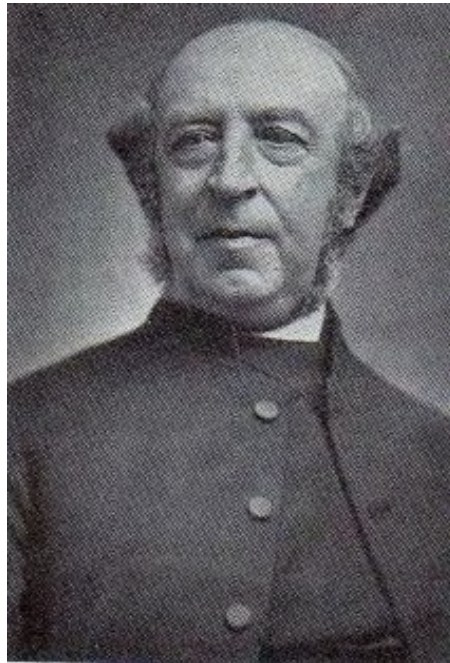
The survey work provided an opportunity for us to take our time locating and assessing buildings which we take for granted and often pass by without taking any real notice. Our time was made all the more pleasurable by the positive reaction of shopkeepers and local people who we met along the way. One shopkeeper even invited us in to continue our conversation over a coffee!

The Estates Team at St. George's Academy were incredibly helpful and walked us around the Stables and Lodge areas to identify specific listed buildings. They also invited us to have a look inside the foyer of Westholme House to see the beautiful panelled woodwork, marble columns and the sculptured medallions high on the walls.

Sadly, some of the listed buildings within Sleaford included The Maltings which our teams could not get access to.

Ed.

Edward Trollope (1817 - 1893)



Edward Trollope 1817-1893

Edward Trollope was an antiquary and an Anglican Bishop of Nottingham in the Victorian era. He was born at Uffington near Stamford on 15 April 1817, the sixth son of Sir John Trollope of Coswick Hall in Uffington and his wife, Anne, the daughter of Henry Thorold of Cuxwold in Leicestershire. He was first cousin to the writer Anthony Trollope as well as cousin to the future Bishop of Winchester, Anthony Wilson Thorold. Edward Trollope was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. He then returned to his native Lincolnshire, living in close proximity to Sleaford as he became vicar of Rauceby in 1841. In 1843 his maternal relative, John Thorold, appointed him to the rectory of Leasingham and he held that living for 50 years. He built a row of almshouses in the village, pictured below, which are referred to in Kelly's Directory of Lincolnshire for 1919 as "almshouses erected and endowed by the late Bishop of Nottingham during the years 1876-84 for poor widows and others."



Leasingham Almshouses



Coat of Arms belonging to Trollope displayed on the Almshouses

Edward Trollope was appointed Archdeacon of Stow in 1867 and his ecclesiastical prominence peaked in 1877 when on 21 December he was consecrated Suffragan Bishop of Nottingham assisting the Bishop of Lincoln in episcopal duties for the northern part of the Lincoln diocese. He played a pivotal role in the creation of the Diocese of Southwell, established in 1884 from portions of the Diocese of Lincoln, through vigorous fundraising that raised £10,000 towards the endowment fund. In 1881 he personally purchased the ruins of the Archbishop's Palace at Southwell including the Great Hall adjacent to Southwell Minster for £1,600 and restored the court room and banqueting hall at a cost of nearly £4,000 intending it as the bishopric's residence; however, it only served partially in that role until Bishop's Manor was constructed in 1905 using elements of the site. To the left of the east window in the Great Hall at Southwell can be seen a portrait of Edward Trollope.



Great Hall, Southwell

Trollope was particularly interested in architecture, antiquities, and local history. He was an enthusiastic member of the Lincolnshire Diocesan Architectural Society, becoming its editorial secretary in 1857 and its chairman ten years later in 1867. He was an active writer and researcher with several books and many articles published. He is particularly remembered as the author of "Sleaford and the Wapentakes of Flaxwell and Aswardhurn in the County of Lincoln," which was first published in 1872 and was highly acclaimed in the Sleaford Gazette upon publication. This is a book much referred to by local historians in the Sleaford area and it was reprinted in 1999 by Heritage Lincolnshire. The reprinted edition contains a foreword written by eminent Sleaford historian, Dr. Simon Pawley, who has also written several books and many articles about the history of Sleaford.

Other published works by Trollope include a book about Hertfordshire-born Pope Adrian 1V (the only English Pope) and genealogies of the Thorold and Trollope families. He also attended an important art exhibition held in Sleaford over a two-week period in the summer of 1882, when he entertained audiences with informative talks about important works of art which had been loaned and were on display at the exhibition demonstrating his knowledge and appreciation of art and the art world.

Edward Trollope's importance is further emphasized with him having an entry in the Dictionary of National Biography and a portrait of him which forms part of the collection of the National Portrait Gallery. He married twice and had two daughters by his first marriage. It is in St. Andrew's Church in Leasingham, with which he was so closely associated for so many years, that memorials to him can be found. There is a memorial bust in the Lady Chapel and a photograph of him dressed in his ecclesiastical garb on display in the church.



Memorial bust of Trollope



Trollope pictured in ecclesiastical garb

Trollope died on 10 December 1893 (the day of the year he is still remembered by Southwell Minster as the restorer of the Great Hall). He died at home at Leasingham Rectory and a standing cross was erected in the churchyard there in his memory, where he is buried. The cross was designed by Arthur Henry Skipworth, who died at the early age of 45 years and who is particularly remembered today for designing reredoses.



Leasingham Rectory - now divided into two dwellings



Memorial Cross to Edward Trollope in Leasingham churchyard

Written and compiled by Robert Turner February 2026

Two refugees at the Ewerby Dower House

The Dower House at Ewerby, still standing in the Main Street, was possibly home for a short time to two famous refugees separated by nearly 800 years.

The story of Thomas Becket's dispute with King Henry II is well known, especially the tragic outcome of the King's throw-away line "Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?". Thomas was murdered on 29th December 1170 in his cathedral at Canterbury.

The dispute between the two men was long standing: once they were firm friends, indeed Thomas had been Henry's Lord Chancellor, but Thomas's elevation to Canterbury in 1162 brought about a rift between them. Thomas sought to assert the independence of the Church in defiance of Henry's insistence on his royal jurisdiction over the clergy. This led to the Constitutions of Clarendon in 1164 – less clerical independence and weaker connection to Rome. All of the other bishops agreed, apart from Thomas Becket who refused to sign. In October 1164, Thomas was summoned to appear before a great council to answer charges of contempt for royal authority. Once convicted, Beckett stormed out of the trial and fled. But to where?

In October 1164, Thomas sought sanctuary with the Prior of Haverholme, a Gilbertine Double House near Ewerby. Thomas was secreted in the Hermitage which is believed to be on the site of, or indeed part of, the Dower House. Disguised as a simple farm labourer, he joined ship on the River Slea and escaped to France where he sought sanctuary under the protection of King Louis VII. Enraged, Henry summoned Gilbert and the Prior to explain their actions in harbouring the fugitive. It is believed that, after a rather nervous few days, they were declared to be innocent and released unharmed.



14th century depiction of Becket with King Henry II

In 1170, Pope Alexander III sought to arbitrate the dispute between the two men. Henry offered a compromise which allowed Thomas to return to England and Canterbury. Sadly, we know that this 'solution' did not end well.

Neils Bohr was an important and famous Danish physicist who made a huge contribution to the understanding of atomic structure between the wars. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1922. In April 1940, Germany invaded and occupied Denmark; the Germans were keen to enlist Bohr's help to create an atomic bomb, as the infamous meeting between Bohr and Werner Heisenberg in 1941 suggests. However, in 1943, Bohr discovered that the Germans considered him to be Jewish and he was then in grave danger. In September 1943, the Danish resistance helped Bohr and his wife to escape to Sweden.

When news of Bohr's escape reached the UK, Lord Cherwell, the chief scientific adviser to Winston Churchill, sent a telegram asking him to come to Britain. He arrived in Scotland on 6th October via the bomb bay of a BOAC de Havilland Mosquito, one of many who took part in the Stockholm Run.

For security reasons, Bohr's presence in Britain was a closely guarded secret and Bohr was accommodated for 3 nights as the guest of the Dowager Duchess of Winchelsea at the Dower House in Ewerby as he made his way covertly to London.



Neils Bohr, Danish physicist

Eventually, he was given an apartment at St James's Palace and an office with the British Tube Alloys team – the cover for the British contribution to the atomic bomb programme. He visited the USA and was involved in the Manhattan Project as a mentor to some of the junior scientists who were working at Los Alamos.

So, two famous men sought refuge, albeit briefly, in a quiet Lincolnshire village.

Mark Bamford

Secretary's ponderings

It is with sadness that I'm writing these ponderings as, of 12 March 2026, the Halifax closed its doors on Southgate for the last time. When I walked up Southgate and saw the empty office and building, I began to ponder on the memories of its first opening way back in 1983.

It was my late husband Peter's first promotion as Halifax Manager. Prior to this, the Halifax business had been conducted through an agency in Chapmans Accountants who I believe were on Handley Street. We moved to Sleaford from South Yorkshire where we'd been living for 11 years and where Peter was an Assistant Manager.

The Southgate building needed much work to be completed before finally opening as a Halifax Branch and Peter moved back to Lincolnshire early to oversee the work. There was much family excitement when myself and our two children were finally able to end our 11 years in South Yorkshire and move to Sleaford to join Peter. The Halifax was finally opened and promptly christened 'Dad's Office' by James and Katy who waved to their Dad every day as they went past on the school bus - no one-way system in those days!

If 'Dad's Office' could talk it would have many stories to tell but I'm sure that one of these would be 'the fire'. One morning, about six months after the Branch had opened, Peter parked the car up in town and was following his usual route down Southgate. He heard and saw a lot of commotion ahead and realised it was outside the Halifax. There was a fire engine and numerous firemen, one of which had an axe and was about to break down the front door into the banking hall. At that point adrenalin cut in and Peter found how fast he could run! He sprinted down Southgate, key in hand and shouting "Don't break the door, I have a key". Sadly he was too late and the door was buckled. Black smoke was coming out of the building and the firemen had to act quickly to stop the fire. Miraculously, there was only smoke damage but that in itself took some cleaning. Family and Staff were recruited to help with the cleaning and the Halifax business was conducted from the Leeds Building Society office over the road until the Halifax premises were suitable to work in again.

Ironically, a few years later, the Halifax took over the whole of Leeds Building Society and some of the ex-Leeds staff transferred over the road to the Halifax.

The Branch, amongst other things, watched over The Milk Race as it sped through Sleaford. After a long wait I think Peter and his staff blinked and almost missed the cycle riders as they went through at such a pace. There was also a planned raid on the premises and secret warnings were given by the Police to be especially aware on a certain day. Fortunately, the raid never happened. I think the raiders had a tip-off.

One Saturday I went into the Halifax dressed as a duck to advertise the forthcoming Town Duck Race. This caused much hilarity amongst the staff as Peter had warned me not to go in ...but that was like holding a reg flag to a bull! I was certain that no-one would know me but the first person I saw in there was the local Traffic Warden who promptly said "Hello Mrs Hopkins". At that point I felt Peter unceremoniously propelling me and my 'Duckmaster' carer out of the banking hall and we ended up on Southgate to continue our travels through town. Words were said when Peter got home that day! Incidentally, I had to use a huge cushion to pad out the costume but I flatly refused to wear the webbed feet so I had yellow tights and high heeled shoes! I wish I could remember some of the comments as we walked around town that day.

All good memories. The Branch was very successful and much business was transacted over the years. Indeed so many people have told me that they obtained their first mortgage via my husband at the Halifax. I have another reason to be proud of what was achieved as I was a 'Halifax Girl' having started my Halifax career at the Cardinals Hat Branch in Lincoln which is where I met my husband to be. There were three office romances there at the time ..all of which ended in office marriages!

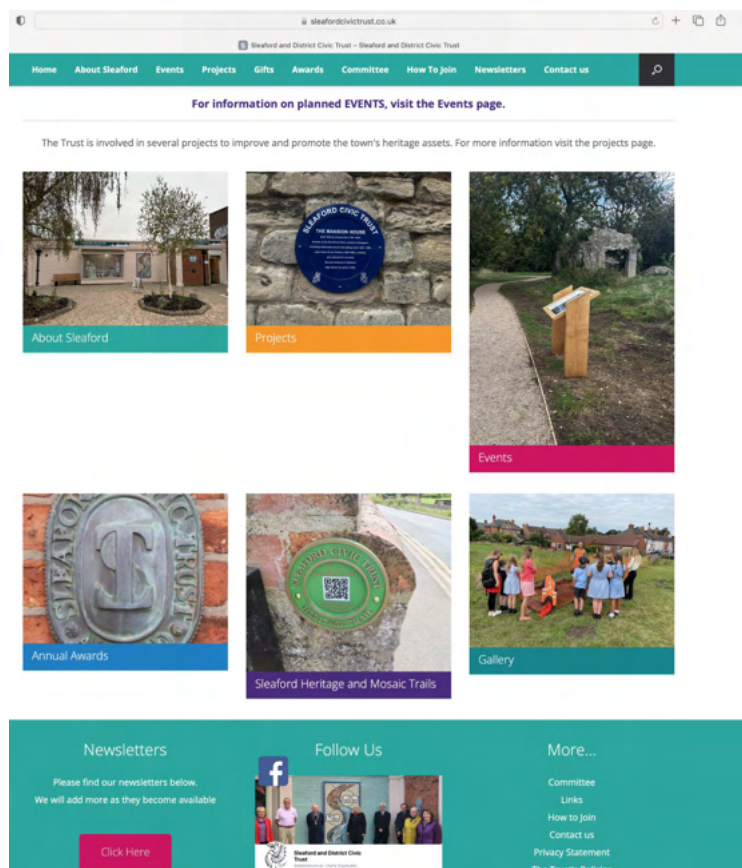
The Sleaford Halifax Branch saw several managers and changes of staff and it also saw some good and successful times. It remained at the centre of Southgate until its recent very sad closure. The building now awaits another chapter in its life, whatever that may be, but I shall always think of it as 'The Halifax'.

Faith, Civic Trust Secretary

Sleaford Civic Trust Website

<https://sleafordcivictrust.co.uk>

There's plenty of information on the Civic Trust website, together with copies of CT newsletters going back to 2013!



I've previously drawn attention to how easy it is to find things on the website from the front page - a screenshot is shown above. **If you click directly onto any of the pictures**, you'll be taken to information on the topic named below the picture.

Social Media – Facebook and Instagram

Did you know that the Civic Trust also has a page on Facebook? You can see a link to the pages at the bottom of the front page of the website.

If you regularly use Facebook, you may already be a follower (we have almost 200 followers now) but if you haven't found the CT pages yet, they're worth a look. There is information about the CT itself of course, but also other posts relating to Sleaford generally as well as heritage and conservation. Sleaford Museum and the Sleaford Castle Heritage Group posts are shared to the Civic Trust page too.

Please do have a browse on our website and Facebook pages and let me know what you think and if there is anything you'd like to see added. **Email:** sleafordct@gmail.com **FAO Doreen Bamford.**

Doreen Bamford, Website Editor

Sleaford Museum

Currently, the Museum's major project is the curation and display of our exciting new dual site exhibition entitled 'Common Ground - Sleaford's Shared Stories'. You may recall that we received a significant grant from the Art Fund to mount a collaborative exhibition with the Hub based upon some new perspectives of our artefact collection. Professional artists have been engaged to respond to the material from our store, the environment in which they were found or used and who might have owned them. Three substantial commissions have been engaged and three further artists have been contracted to work with community groups to respond to the same themes. The results of this engagement will form the core of the exhibition.

This has become a very engaging, refreshing and thoughtful process. In my experience, you cannot second guess what perspectives fresh artistic eyes can come up with and so it is proving to be! It is not just new work; our partners at the Hub have scoured the country and discovered art and installations from previous years, and projects which also respond to the exhibition theme. The media employed ranges from watercolour to video via a multiplicity of media in-between.

The exhibition will run from Saturday 18th July until Sunday 8th November 2026 and will occupy the main gallery in the Hub and the Museum window, plus possibly some extra space. Some of the exhibits are interactive but, as always, visitors will be invited to give their reactions and opinions. The Museum Curatorial Team, Jacqui Cleaver and Jeannette Connolly in partnership with Lucy Lumb and Joshua Lockwood from the Hub, are putting together a fantastic show. The collaboration with the Hub has been a great success and their expertise has been invaluable. I look forward to welcoming you on the Preview Night at the Hub, Friday 17th July. Please let me know if you would like to be there.

The artists.....



From left to right: Madara Vimba, Emily Andersen Photography, Andrew Bracey, Harriet Plewis, Liz Kelleher, Danica Maier, Dino Zhang, Madhu Manipatruni.

Photo: Faye Parker, Hub

Mark Bamford, Chair, Sleaford Museum Trust

Future Events for 2026

Friday, July 17th	'Common Ground: Sleaford's Shared Stories' - Preview Night at The Hub - assume 6pm to 8pm. Please contact Mark Bamford at sleafordct@gmail.com FAO Mark Bamford to express your interest in the event.
Saturday, July 18th to Sunday, November 8th	'Common Ground: Sleaford's Shared Stories' - The major new collaboration with Sleaford Museum exploring local heritage through contemporary art and community participation. Main exhibition at The Hub plus displays at Sleaford Museum
Tuesday, July 28th	The Carre Family Vault @ St Denys' by Simon Pawley, local Historian and author. After publishing his joint book (with Michael Turland) on the History of the Carre Family, Simon will share more of his extensive research on the mysterious Carre family vault at St Denys' Church. St Denys' Church Rooms, off the Market Place in Sleaford, starts at 7.30pm and lasts approximately an hour. Refreshments are available + raffle. £3 for non-members and £1 for members.
Saturday, September 12th	Heritage Open Day - Almshouse Chapel
Saturday, September 19th	Heritage Open Day - Talk on the Carre family at St. Denys' Church
Thursday, September 24th	The Civic Trust Special Event Day - The Source on Southgate. The well-known Celebrity Auctioneer Colin Young will give a talk and provide valuations on any treasures we bring along.
Tuesday, September 29th	Search for Two Lincolnshire Brothers by Jonathan Smith, Sleaford Museum Treasurer & Researcher. Jonathan will talk about the effect of the First World War on Lincolnshire towns including Sleaford, Stamford and Bourne (as well as Lincoln). St Denys' Church Rooms, off the Market Place in Sleaford. Starts at 7.30pm and lasts approximately an hour. Refreshments are available + raffle. £3 for non-members and £1 for members.

Corporate Members

We would like to thank our Corporate Members for their renewed support for 2026.



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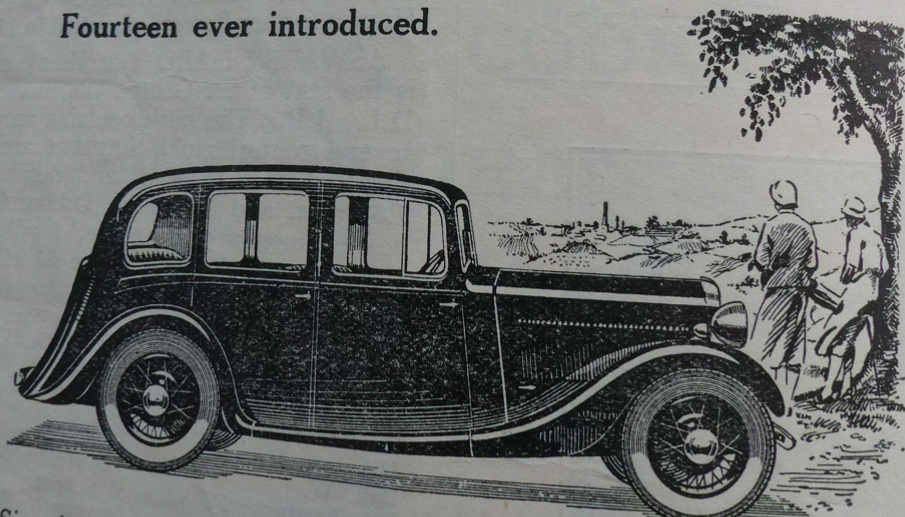
Blast from the past

A Holland Bros advert from the 1935 Mortons' Lincolnshire Almanack...

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The attractive modern lines of this new Wolseley Fourteen, the exquisite taste of its charmingly finished interior, and the superb ease which characterises its brilliant road performance make it **by far the most notable Fourteen ever introduced.**

**14
HP**



Six-cylinder engine (61.5 x 90 mm.); four-speed synchromesh gearbox with free-wheel; underslung compound frame; draught-diverting front windows and hinged quarter-lights; winding windscreen; sliding sunshine roof, etc. Triplex Glass throughout.

Price
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