
The Newsletter of the Sleaford and District Civic Trust

St Denys' Church, Aswarby

Editor's comments

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Civic Matters. I hope you're enjoying these warm autumnal days after the long, hot and tiring summer. I recently asked someone what had they had done over the summer and they replied 'Melt!'.

In terms of events, the summer was a quiet time for the Civic Trust but plenty of planning was going on behind the scenes in preparation for the Heritage Open Days, the Special Social and the next Blue Plaques. Talking of the Special Social on the 24th, I would like to express our thanks to Faith for organising this very successful event.

As always, I try to ensure the newsletter is engaging and informative using a policy of 'a little of something for everyone'. This edition is no exception with a wide range of articles covering the 'Little known Art Treasures of Sleaford' (the first in a series by Robert Turner), a continuation of the Ward & Dale Ltd story by John Dale, the Sir Joseph Banks Exhibition by Harriott and a fascinating piece of WWII research involving the Museum entitled 'A Dutch Patriot's Story' from Mark.

If you can, please make the most of two Sleaford themed exhibitions: 'Common Ground - Sleaford's Shared Stories' at The Hub and Museum and 'Sir Joseph Banks - Made in Sleaford' in Navigation House. Finally there's a 'We will Remember Them' tour at the Cemetery, led by volunteers, in November ..with a special link to the Battle of Waterloo! (details in Future Events).

I do hope you enjoy the read.

Editor: Paul Hart

Chair's update

Sleaford Castle - We have no further information as to when the work to tidy up the site entrance is to be carried out. We believe the holdup is that a final detail on the Coring Project has not been received by the Council, thus any further site activity is held. The SCHG is trying to resolve the situation.

Civic Trust Banking - Our accounts continue to look healthy with our long-term investments continuing to yield good returns. Long term savings account funds will be re-invested.

The Mansion House - We reported in the last newsletter that the Trust has great concern that the front of the Mansion House, which was Kirk's old home, is looking very neglected and shames this splendid building. NKDC are liaising with the owners, so hopefully the result will be to get some building repairs in hand.

Heritage Open Days - This year's Heritage Open Days were held on the 12th September for the Almshouse Chapel, and the 19th of September for the Carres Family talk at St Denys' Church. Given the poor attendances of last year, we decided to advertise the events locally this year, distributing flyers around the town. This proved to be a very successful method for 'spreading the word' with very good attendances for both events. The Almshouse Chapel Open Day attracted a large number of visitors (in excess of 50) whilst the Carre Family talk attracted 17 visitors plus committee members.



The Carre Family talk at St. Denys'

Special Social - On September 24th, we had a very successful social afternoon with Colin Young as our guest speaker - see separate article

David Marriage, Chair

In memory of Eileen Robson

Sadly, Eileen recently passed away at the age of 100!

Eileen was probably best known as a family historian, serving as Secretary of Lincolnshire Family History Society for many years. However, while self-deprecating about her skills and knowledge she was also an excellent historian and for many years would send me snippets of information that she had found in the course of her researches. I always stored these away, even if I had no use for them at the time, and it is truly remarkable how often I went back to them, sometimes years later, when I realised their importance. I will no doubt still be doing this for years to come.

She was always kind and supportive to me and I held her in the very highest regard. It is commonplace to say that somebody will be truly missed, but Eileen certainly will be.

Simon Pawley

She will be remembered as a great supporter of Sleaford Museum. She always came to meetings when she could, and was always ready to help and give advice. We have such fond memories of Eileen and will miss her.

David Marriage

Secretary's Ponderings

Since the June Newsletter I have been 'pondering' on changes in our life and our surroundings etc etc. This follows on from my article on the old Halifax building in town, and pondering about change was prompted by a notice that I have now seen on the building window. It seems that the old Halifax is now to be the Town's Banking Hub. It is so pleasing to hear that this important building is to continue providing a financial service to the Town.

I recently read a very interesting article by Matt Bentley, NKDC Conservation Officer about the Grade II Listed Buildings in town and the need to preserve them in the best way we can. Preserving the buildings doesn't always mean keeping them totally as they were originally. Many of the buildings have commercial usage or are residential homes and some of them have been updated in a sensitive way in accordance with the Conservation Regulations, but allowing most of the old features to remain as much as possible.

Running alongside the physical preservation of the buildings is the need to showcase their history. The Civic Trust is playing its part by the continuation of our Blue Plaques for Sleaford Project. In this way we can not only show a potted history of the buildings but also commemorate some of the notable people connected with them.

In the next few weeks our ninth and tenth Plaques will be installed - one on the Market Place for Thomas Fawcett and the other one on The Manor House on Northgate (*see photos on next page*). We shall also be producing a leaflet showcasing the first ten Blue Plaques - the leaflet is in the planning stages but I would hope that it will be available before the end of the year.

My 'ponderings' have also made me think about the way the Civic Trust has changed over the years. It seems to me that the Trust was very involved in town matters but, with many more members, the social side was very prevalent.

Nowadays, we are a much smaller Trust but remain just as important to the Town. The Committee does, amongst many other things, keep a watching brief on planning matters and we certainly send in comments about individual Planning Applications when we feel it is necessary. We have also been very pleased to be involved with helping to survey the town's Grade II Listed buildings and look forward to being involved with the NKDC Conservation Team once again should the opportunity arise.

Of course, the Trust, via the Sleaford Castle Heritage Group, is also involved in helping to preserve the Castle site and to raise awareness of the history of this enormously important asset too. Keep a lookout both in future Newsletters and also on social media for updates on the Project. There is also an excellent booklet on Sleaford Castle which is available to purchase in Sleaford Museum and one or two venues around town.

The work I have mentioned above falls on the shoulders of the dedicated Members of your Committee. The Trust is always ready to welcome new Members - maybe you can think of someone else that you could encourage to become a Member of Sleaford Civic Trust and help us to keep that watching brief on the history of our town and the changes that are sometimes necessary to help us move forward.



The next Blue Plaques to be installed over the coming weeks

Faith, Civic Trust Secretary

Ward & Dale Ltd - the 'set' plaques

Ward and Dales claim to fame is that they were the largest Steam Ploughing Contractors in the world; at their peak in 1914, they had 24 sets - that's two ploughing engines, a living van, a plough, a cultivator and water tank per set. In 1911 the firm became limited, and it's at this stage that each set was assigned a number, with a plaque on each engine and one on the living van, so that's 72 plaques in total. Of the No. 1 set, being the first engines bought by Fred Ward in 1879, I have been told that someone has a No. 1 set plaque, but it's in two pieces.

Over time, as the diesel tractor developed, most of the sets were scrapped, it being no longer economical to continue with steam. Today there are just thirteen of those engines, and as far as I'm aware, just one living van remaining, all minus their plaques.

In 2012, with nothing better to do one Saturday evening, I Googled Ward and Dale. To my surprise, a Ward and Dale plaque numbered 16 appeared on the screen; it had been up for auction earlier that very day. I then had to wait until Monday morning to phone the auctioneers to try to find out who had bought the plaque. To my delight, it didn't reach its reserve, so it hadn't sold. I bought it, and it hangs on my lounge wall, and one of the things about this that sticks in my mind is that when I told my sister, she commented that I was meant to have it.

On the 21st June this year, a Sunday evening, I checked my emails, one of which was from a friend in Lincoln who asked if I was aware of a No. 2 Ward and Dale plaque being auctioned by GoldingYoung in Bourne on Thursday ...I wasn't. Not having even been to an auction before, I first went to the viewing day on Tuesday where I registered to bid. Telling friends of this, I was advised to set myself a limit, which was something I couldn't do because the plaque was only going to come home with me! Returning on Thursday, I found myself bidding against an online bidder, with the hammer going down at £550 plus fees.

I'm now the very proud owner of two Ward and Dale plaques, but I do have room on the wall for more!

By coincidence, Colin Young, who auctioned the plaque, was the guest speaker at the Civic Trust Special Social on September 24th.



My original acquisition - No 16 Set plaque



Ward & Dale Ltd No 2 Set Plaque



No 2 Set Plaque at the entrance to it's spiritual home - the Ward & Dale Ltd site

John Dale, Civic Trust Researcher

The Sir Joseph Banks Exhibition - Made in Lincolnshire

Visitors are invited to discover the early life of the Lincolnshire-born explorer Sir Joseph Banks in a free exhibition at Navigation House, Sleaford. The exhibition started on 12th September 2026 and will continue through to Spring 2027.

The exhibition explores the childhood years that helped shape Banks' lifelong curiosity, from roaming the Revesby Estate with his sister Sophia to collecting flowers, butterflies and moths on the edge of the undrained Lincolnshire Fens. Visitors will be able to follow a new family trail, sample Georgian-inspired treats and drinks, and try silhouette drawing - a popular Georgian pastime. Paul Scott, from the Sir Joseph Banks Society in Horncastle, describes the Fens of Banks' childhood as "the aviary of England", and that it was "rich with ponds, lakes, lagoons and birdlife" before the landscape was transformed by drainage and agricultural change.

Navigation House is a very fitting place to launch the exhibition because of Banks' direct connection with the Sleaford Navigation. It was from a position of great influence that Banks was able to assist the passage of the Act of Enablement for the Sleaford Navigation through Parliament in 1792. Despite spending a great deal of time at his London house in Soho Square, Banks retained his interest and involvement in Lincolnshire and saw the Sleaford Navigation and the neighbouring Horncastle Canal as vital improvements to the economic future of the area. He worked hard to promote the benefits of both ventures, and as such was invited to choose the mottoes and design the respective crests. The crest designed by Banks can still be seen today above the grand front door of Navigation House.

Harriott Righini-Brand, the exhibition curator and supporter of Navigation House, said: "This exhibition is a personal collection of thoughts, art and objects about the early years of Sir Joseph Banks at Revesby and the 'making' of the man that he became." Through art, objects and storytelling, the exhibition looks beyond Banks' later fame to reveal the young boy growing up at Revesby, exploring the countryside around him and beginning the habits of observation and collecting that would stay with him for life.

Navigation House is open weekly from Friday to Monday, 10am to 2pm. It is part of a small collection of heritage sites owned and operated by North Kesteven District Council. For more information on Navigation House or any of the historic sites managed by NKDC, visit the Heart of Lincs website.



Inside the exhibition

Harriott Brand, Exhibition Curator

Little known Art Treasures of Sleaford

Having researched the history of the Victorian Art Schools and how this national initiative was rolled out locally in Sleaford, I became aware that alongside very visible buildings and monuments which are very much part of the Sleaford scene, there are a number of hidden art treasures in various locations across the town which are largely unknown about by the people of Sleaford. In this series of articles, as an adjunct to my research into the Sleaford School of Art, I have brought together those items of which I am aware (there may well be others,) which are hidden away but are of artistic interest.

One of these, a memorial to Anne Bankes, which can be found in St Denys' church, is specifically mentioned by Nikolas Pevsner in his important work entitled "The Buildings of England." He describes this memorial as depicting "a young woman sinking to the ground, remarkably tender and with a touch of the Rococo." Its mention by him further emphasizes its importance.

Throughout the series, the location of each item of artistic interest has been noted, together with the reason for it being included in this piece, usually because it was designed or made by someone in their generation who has subsequently achieved a national reputation for art, design, and creativity.

We'll start the series with a look at the Almshouses Chapel...

The chapel at the Almshouses in Eastgate was opened for divine service on 3rd September 1845, having been incorporated into the south wing which was built earlier that year. It is no longer in use as a chapel but it is opened for viewing by prior arrangement at certain times of the year such as the Heritage Open Day. It is of much interest as it has been untouched by time and is an architectural gem.

The stained-glass window in the chapel was made by Powell and Sons of Whitefriars, noted for creating glass as close as possible in texture and colour to medieval stained glass.



Sleaford Almshouses Chapel Altar

The window was installed in 1890 in memory of two former vicars of Sleaford, Revd. Dr Richard Yerborough and his son, Revd. Richard Yerborough who succeeded him as vicar. The chapel also contains a finely carved altar and altar cross by Thomas Dale of West Banks, an exceptional carver who is known to have made at least a dozen altars for Lincolnshire churches including one in the north transept of St Denys' Church.

Written in 2025 by Robert Turner

*The next article in the series will appear
in the December Issue - Ed.*

A Dutch Patriot's Story

The Sleaford Museum holds a considerable amount of archive material on behalf of the Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron (ARS) which, you may recall, reformed at Ruskington in January 1944 and from there prepared for their actions in Holland as part of the battle for Arnhem in that September. In August this year, the Museum was contacted by Richard Heijloo from the Netherlands asking to view the ARS archive, the first such request we have had. I was able to set the material out for Richard to view and what was initially a routine response to an enquiry became a most fascinating and engaging afternoon. I think it best to let Richard tell you his story:

“At an early age, I was confronted with the visible scars of the Battle of Arnhem on my father’s body; the entry and exit wounds from a bullet were clearly visible on his leg. My father never really spoke about it, and although I was interested in the Second World War from a young age, I never actually inquired further into how he had become involved in the fighting around Oosterbeek.

In 1976, his story was recorded in the book 'Zwevend naar de dood' by authors Th. Peelen and A.L.J. van Vliet.- ‘Tonny Ging Gewoon Helpen’ (‘Tonny Just Went to Help’). In September 1981, my father attended the commemorations in Oosterbeek. There, he was recognized by a former paratrooper, Stan Collishaw. He turned out to be the soldier with whom he had shared a foxhole or trench and alongside whom he had been wounded. My father passed away in 1984, and between 1981 and 1984, he and my mother visited this soldier in England.

In 2023, I was visited by Tony Sheldon, a British historian and journalist who wanted to learn more about my father; that was the moment I decided to conduct some research of my own. I discovered a number of documents among his personal papers, which prompted me to start compiling a timeline.

Until February 2026, I had always assumed that my father had joined the 2nd Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment. At that time, the photograph of the British soldier with his wife was my only lead. To discover the soldier's name and the unit he belonged to, I contacted the Staffordshire Regiment Museum and the Airborne Assault Museum and, using leaflets, reached out to members of the Arnhem Fellowship as well as random passers-by during the 2024 and 2025 commemorations; unfortunately, without success.

The breakthrough came in February 2026. Captain Geert Jonker called me, believing that my father had been attached to the Reconnaissance Squadron since, after being wounded, my father had been taken to ‘Gelders Hof’, which served as a field dressing station near the positions of the Reconnaissance Squadron. He asked if my father had ever spoken about it. Unfortunately, I never really discussed that period with him. However, I did find a Reconnaissance Squadron membership card among his belongings, which suggested a connection.

On Geert Jonker’s recommendation, I bought John Fairley’s book (1). Even before I received the book, Geert Jonker sent me a page mentioning a young Dutch resistance fighter who had joined the squadron and been wounded. No name was given, but it was quite a coincidence. Through my brother, I received a newsletter from the Reconnaissance Squadron. It welcomes my father and includes a brief message from him. This was the confirmation I was looking for.

The secretary of the Arnhem Fellowship drew my attention to Bob Hilton's book (2). I was very lucky to manage to get hold of a copy. Even before the book arrived, Bob Hilton had already sent me two pages from it containing a one-paragraph summary of my father's entire story.

The book includes the same photograph of the British soldier, Stan Collishaw, with his wife....



My search continues; I have since learned that Stan's wife passed away in 2008 and that his daughter sadly lost her life in a car accident. I would like to get in touch with his granddaughter, Kate Collishaw."

Richard's account tells of his research to find out as much as he can about his father's involvement with the ARS over those two days in September. But, here is Stan Collishaw's account of the encounter, taken from Bob Hilton's book:

A young Dutchman attached himself to the Squadron (the ARS) and made himself very useful with his local knowledge of the area. He was always optimistic and was delighted and proud when he acquired a British uniform. He spent two days with me in a slit trench in a wood off Oranjeweg and I taught him how to use and clean a .303 rifle and Bren. Unfortunately I could not have taught him enough about keeping ones head down, because whilst we were receiving some unwelcome attention from snipers, he climbed out of the trench as he saw some enemy movement about 40 yards away.

As he stood up, he was shot just below the right knee and when I looked at his leg, he had the all-too-familiar small hole at the front and a gaping wound at the back. The Field Ambulance took him away and his and our main concern was that he should get rid of his uniform as the Germans would kill him if he was found wearing it.

Tonny was taken to a Dressing Station in a large house just west of Hartenstein. He subsequently fell into German hands and was transferred to St Elisabeth's Hospital, Arnhem. During this time, he maintained that his life was saved by a British Medical Officer, Captain Jones [Captain J G Jones RMO 1st Battalion The Border Regiment], who covered for him when the Germans overran the hospital. He was hidden by Dutch friends on the hospital staff in the underground cells normally reserved for dangerous mental patients and, some six weeks later, he was spirited away to a remote farm where he remained until the liberation.

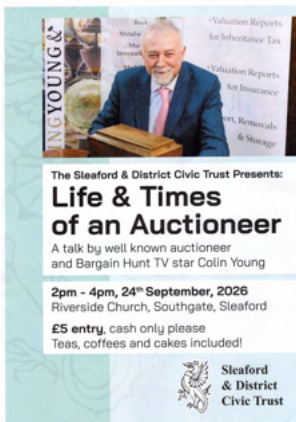
- (1) John Fairley's book is available as part of the ARS Archive in the Museum
- (2) Bob Hilton's book has been removed from the archive by veterans of the ARS. Richard paid 250 Euros for his – from a German!



Richard and Mark at the Museum

Mark Bamford, Chair, Sleaford Museum Trust

Special Social Event



The Special Social event was held on September 24th at the Riverside Church in Sleaford. Colin Young, of BBC TV Bargain Hunt fame and well known local auctioneer, gave a wonderfully entertaining talk on 'The Life and Times of an Auctioneer'. Colin described his career from his first steps into the auctioneering business in Bourne to his company today with some insightful and hilarious stories along the way.

Using some items brought in for valuation, Colin talked us through the approach an auctioneer would take when assessing an items value.

We had a very good attendance of 45 for the afternoon.



Ed.

Sleaford Civic Trust Website & Social Media

<https://sleafordcivictrust.co.uk> + Facebook



Social Media – Facebook: Sleaford Castle Heritage Group (SCHG)

Did you know that the Civic Trust also has an SCHG page on Facebook?

If you regularly use Facebook, you may already be a follower - we have nearly 750 followers now. That's an indication of the interest in Sleaford Castle site and the improvements which the Civic Trust was instrumental in making, together with Sleaford Town Council and NKDC. The Sleaford Castle model is now on display in the Hub, Sleaford, as part of the Common Ground joint exhibition between Sleaford Museum and the Hub.

On the SCHG pages, we are also displaying the regular updates from Newark Castle as they restore the Gatehouse of the 'sister' castle to Sleaford (also built by Bishop Alexander at about the same time). They are also creating a visitor centre, due to be open in mid 2027.

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.**

The Sleaford Castle Model - now at the Hub



Doreen Bamford, Website Editor

Sleford Museum

Common Ground - Sleford's Shared Stories (Joint Exhibition)

On the 17th July, the joint exhibition between the Museum and the Hub was premiered. On a warm summer evening we welcomed some 68 visitors to review the Museum window display, which included the work of four of the artists who were commissioned using the Art Fund grant, secured in partnership with the Hub.



Preview evening at the Museum



In the Hub - The watercolour frieze of the buildings of Southgate by Jack R Thompson

Whilst the style of the contemporary artwork in our window is not to all tastes, it acts as a portal to a much larger display of many more exhibits in the main gallery of the Hub. There are some star attractions which, if you have not viewed so far, you really should see. From my perspective, the work of the photographer Nicola Davison-Reed stands out: she has captured the essence of the brief in her photographic interpretation of some of the Museum artefacts; Common Ground - Sleford's Shared Stories.

Some other exhibits are on show in the Town for the first time, in particular a series of charming watercolours of scenes capturing 1950's Sleford by Karl Salsbury Wood. Perhaps the real star of the show is the Sleford equivalent of the Bayeux Tapestry – the stunning watercolour frieze of the buildings of Southgate – caught in time by the eye of a man who knew them so well, Jack R Thompson.

My thanks go to the Curatorial teams from both the Hub (Joshua Lockwood & Lucy Lumb) and the Sleford Museum (Jacqui Cleaver & Jeannette Connelly) for their time-consuming and painstaking work in bringing the joint exhibition to us.

Mark Bamford, Chair, Sleford Museum Trust

Future Events for 2026

Running now until 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. Normal Hub and Museum opening times.
Running now through to Spring 2027	Sir Joseph Banks Exhibition - Navigation House, Sleaford. Navigation House is open weekly from Friday to Monday, 10am to 2pm
Saturday, October 24th 11am - 3pm	Sleaford Pumpkin Fest - Sleaford Market Place. Enjoy a fun-filled autumn event featuring a pumpkin patch with around 200 pumpkins to collect after completing the scarecrow window trail. Visitors can also enjoy Morris dancers, garden games, crafts, the NK Young Traders Market, and plenty more family-friendly activities. This event is FREE.
Saturday, November 7th & Sunday, November 8th 12noon & 1.30pm tours	'We Will Remember Them Tour' - Join us for a free tour of military and military associated graves in Sleaford Cemetery. The meeting point is the site office on the main driveway at Sleaford Cemetery, Ashfield Road, NG34 7DZ. The volunteer led tours start at 12 noon and 1.30pm and last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Please be aware we will be walking on grassed areas. Well behaved dogs on leads are welcome.
Tuesday, November 24th 2-4pm	The final event of the year, back by popular demand, is our 'Talks, Tea & Teasers' afternoon on 24th November. You will hear 4 short talks from the Museum Team, you will be challenged by some fiendish puzzles set by the one cursed by Bishop Alexander, and get to eat some great cake! The fun starts at 2pm, once again in St Denys' Church Rooms. £5 on the door.

Corporate Members

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



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