

SPIRES AND STEEPLES

Part 4:

RUSKINGTON TO SLEAFORD



Moderate Terrain

6 Miles
Linear
3 hours

170519



Access Notes

1. The walk is relatively flat and follows a mixture of field and riverside paths and tracks, some of which can get very muddy after periods of rain.
2. There is one road crossing (of the A153) that needs particular care and there is one short stretch of walking along a quiet lane, but otherwise you are well away from traffic.
3. You will need to negotiate some gates, kissing gates, footbridges and a few flights of steps, but there are no stiles or livestock on route.
4. OS Map Explorer 272 Lincoln.
5. Please remember the Countryside Code

A 6 mile (10km) linear walk from Ruskington to Sleaford, forming the fourth and final part of the Spires and Steeples Trail in Lincolnshire.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is a linear walk which uses a train for the return leg, with trains running Mon-Sat ONLY. On Sundays, you will need to use two cars instead.

You will begin by enjoying the highlights of Ruskington, before passing between large crop fields to reach the Sleaford Navigation, with views of a priory ruin. The remainder of the route follows the banks of the navigation which is teeming with nature, passing some of the old locks and mills along the way and enjoying some gems within Sleaford for the final stretch.

ABOUT: The Spires and Steeples Arts and Heritage Trail is a 27 mile (43km) linear long-distance walk from Lincoln to Sleaford. The name refers to the spires of churches being the landmarks to which visitors make their way and to the rural sport of steeple chasing. This guide is published through a collaboration with North Kesteven District Council to inspire more people to enjoy the district's landscapes, ancient woodland, historic buildings and charming villages.

LOGISTICS: As a linear walk, you will need to make transport arrangements for the return leg. Both Ruskington and Sleaford have rail stations and the return leg can be completed by a 9-minute train journey Mon-Sat, with trains usually running about hourly. If you are walking on a Sunday, you will need to use two cars, parking one at each end. If this stretch sounds too long for you, it is possible to split it into two parts, using two cars and the Stepping Out car park at Haverholme (Waypoint 3).

FACILITIES: Refreshments are available on the High Street in Ruskington at the start of the walk, or at Cogglesford Mill Cottage, The National Centre for Craft and Design or various inns and cafes in Sleaford at the end of the walk.

Getting there

The walk begins at All Saints Church in the centre of Ruskington and ends at St Deny's Church in the centre of Sleaford. If you are arriving by train, Ruskington Rail Station is located about half a mile from the village centre. If you are coming by car, there is ample street parking in Ruskington, though it would be thoughtful to leave your car at the east end of the High Street away from the shops. Approximate post code **NG34 9DP**.



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Walk Sections



Start to Rail Crossing



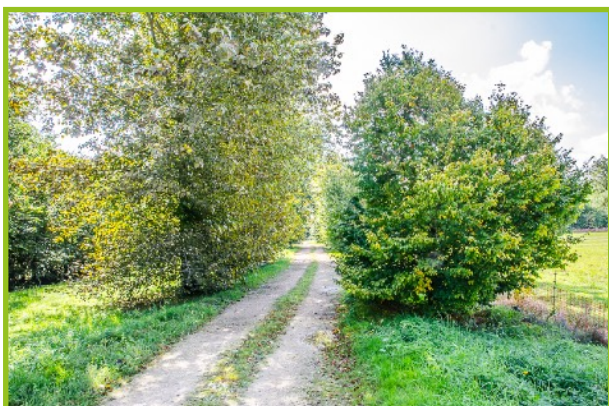
The walk begins outside the Reading Room and opposite All Saints Church in Ruskington, at the junction between High Street North and Church Street. Standing with your back to the Reading Room (with the church opposite to your right), turn left along the pavement of High Street North. Just a short way along, cross over the road and cross the stream via the ornate blue bridge to reach High Street South and turn left to continue along this (with the stream running on your left).

At the minor road junction, we take a short detour right into Jubilee Street. Just 50 paces along you will find a pair of ornate red brick cottages on your right, the Teetotal Homes (notice the name carved just below the roof line) which were built in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Head back to High Street South and turn right to continue your journey along this.

Pass another ornate blue bridge on your left and Ruskington Youth Centre on your right to reach the road junction. Turn right into Chestnut Street and continue to the T-junction at the end. Turn left into Station Road and follow this as it bends right. 30 metres later, immediately after House 61, turn left down the public footpath which leads you between houses and then crosses the railway via a blue bridge.



Rail Crossing to A153



Beyond the rail bridge, keep ahead on the enclosed path (ignoring a footpath signed to the right) and pass through the small gate ahead to enter a crop field. Go straight ahead across this first field to reach a fingerpost in the tree line at the far side. Follow the path into the tree line, crossing the footbridge over a stream and then emerging into a second field.

Follow the left-hand edge of this field, with the hedge running on your left. At the far side, pass through the hedge gap and a gate to enter a third field (part of a poultry farm). With your back to the gate walk diagonally right (about 1 o'clock), passing under power lines and exiting via a gate at the far side. You will come to a junction with a stone and grass track.

Turn right along the track (a Restricted Byway), passing a farm building on your right. 200 metres later, you will reach a fingerpost marking a T-junction in the byway. Turn left here and follow the grass track through trees, with a stream running down to your left. Soon the views open up each side, simply follow this grass track for almost a mile to reach a junction with the A153.



A153 to Halverholme Bridge Car Park



NOTE: This is a fast-moving road so take particular care to wait for a gap in the traffic. Cross over the road and walk straight ahead into the side road signed to Haverholme. Follow this pretty lane (taking care of any traffic), lined with trees which include the remains of a lime tree avenue. The lane leads you across an ornate stone arched bridge, Haverholme Bridge. The bridge dates from 1893 and bears the arms of the Earl of Winchelsea because he paid the extra cost for its construction when the local authority would only pay for a simple flat bridge.

Immediately after the bridge, turn right into the small car park. It is worth making your way to the left-hand end of the car park for a view of the remains for Haverholme Priory. The first priory founded here in 1137 was for Cistercian monks from Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, but within two years they left and a Gilbertine order moved in and remained for 400 years until the Dissolution in 1538. The priory building changed hands a number of times, finally coming into the possession of the Earls of Winchelsea. They held the property until 1927, when it was demolished all apart from the remains you see today.



Halverholme Bridge Car Park to Private Garden

Leave the car park via the kissing gate in the woodland corner to join the path with the waterway running on your right. The path leads you to Haverholme Lock, the perfect place to pause and understand the history of this waterway...

The Sleaford Navigation opened in 1794 and connected Sleaford to the River Witham. It is called a navigation rather than a canal, as it utilised a pre-existing river (the New River Slea) rather than being dug as a completely new channel. The





lock here had the highest rise on the whole navigation, nearly 10 feet. Trade continued on the lower part of the waterway until the late 1940s, but then the full length of the waterway was reclaimed by nature. Some restoration work has been done by the Sleaford Navigation Trust, which aims to restore the full length of the waterway to make it navigable once again.

Use the footbridge to cross over the lock and then a second footbridge (just to your right) to cross the overflow channel. Immediately after this second bridge, turn left to join the path which leads you ahead with the navigation running on your left. Your path stays directly alongside the water, until you reach the wire fencing of a private garden directly ahead.

4 → 5 Private Garden to Holdingham Mill



Here you are forced to turn right (away from the water), following a wire fence running on your left. Stay alongside this fence and you will emerge to a stone driveway. Keep ahead along this, passing a white property on your left and, almost immediately afterwards (just after a small line of trees), turn left onto the grass permissive path. NOTE: Take care not to miss this turn. The path leads you up the bank to reach the waterway ahead. Turn right to continue your waterside journey.

Follow the grass embankment path until you emerge to a quiet lane, Papermill Lane. Turn left across the bridge and then turn immediately right to join the next stretch of embankment footpath, now with the water running on your right. Almost immediately you will pass the old Leasingham Lock on your right. Further along you will draw level with a beautiful old mill building on your right, with a footbridge across the former lock on your right and a three-way fingerpost on your left.

This is the site of Holdingham Mill. At this point, you have the option of taking an extra detour to visit Evedon Church should you wish. To exclude the detour, simply skip to the next section. To take the detour, turn left at this junction onto the restricted byway. Follow the grass track, leading you away from the

navigation, where after a ford and footbridge take you over the Old River Slea and a track leads you directly to the church. Retrace your steps back to Holdingham Mill when you are ready to continue.

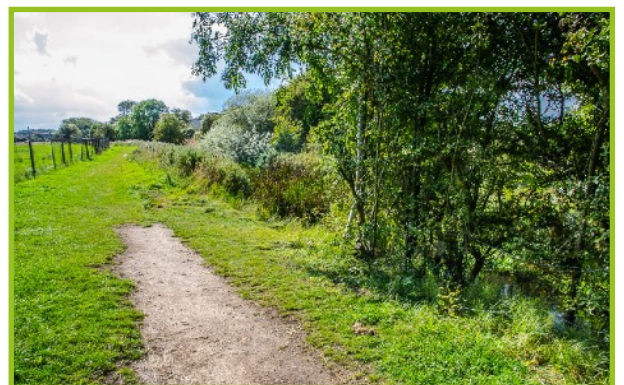
5 → 6 Holdingham Mill to Rail Underpass



From Holdingham Mill, continue ahead on the embankment path with the waterway running on your right. Further along, where the grass track ends, keep ahead up the short slope heading towards the main road. At the top of the slope, turn immediately right down a flight of concrete steps and then turning left to pass under the road bridge (take care as the footing is uneven here).

At the far side, you will reach a junction with a farm access lane. Cross over and go straight ahead to join the next stretch of grass track with the waterway still running on your right. Further along, just after passing a bench on your left, you will approach the green metal rail bridge. Just before this, fork left on the narrow grass path and follow this as it swings right to lead you through the rail underpass tunnel.

6 → 7 Rail Underpass to Cogglesford Mill



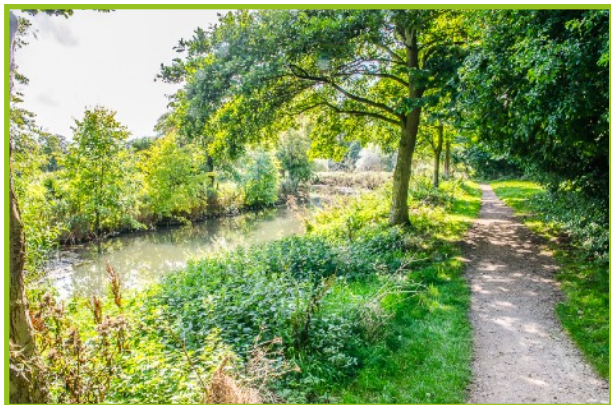
At the far side, pass through the remains of a kissing gate and bear left to continue on the path (with the waterway running on your right). When you reach the next fingerpost, pass through (or alongside) the kissing gate ahead and continue on the riverside tarmac path. After 200 metres you will come to a junction in the path, directly alongside Cogglesford Lock. This is the final lock on the navigation.

Turn right to cross the lock bridge and you will see Cogglesford



Mill on your right. This was one of at least a dozen watermills along the River Sleaf in medieval times. As a watermill site, Cogglesford's origins may go back to Anglo-Saxon times although the building we see now dates from the early 1700s. The mill still operates as a working water mill and, during opening times (usually every day in summer and weekends in winter), you can view the mill and buy flour made here.

7 → 8 Cogglesford Mill to The Nettles



With the mill on your right, turn left to join the path with the river running on your left. The meadows and housing estates on the opposite banks are part of Old Sleaford. Archaeological finds are rich in this area, dating back to the Neolithic era (around 4000BC), and hundreds of coins have been excavated (more than 700 in one dig alone). Evidence suggests this is possibly the site of a mint, perhaps the local capital for the Coritani tribe.

You will come to a junction in the path. Take the left-hand branch, staying alongside the river. The area to your right is known as Lollycocks Field. This rough grassland was mentioned in the Domesday Book and is now managed as a nature reserve.

At the end of the reserve, turn left to cross the footbridge over the river. Before we continue to the end of the trail, we take a short detour to visit The Nettles. To do this, turn left back along the river, crossing the old sluice and then turning right into The Nettles. This area is managed by artsNK as a space for experimental outdoor arts projects and houses a number of sculptures.

8 → 9 The Nettles to Old Wharf



When you have finished at The Nettles, retrace your steps back to the footbridge and keep ahead on the riverside path, with the

river on your right and passing the leisure centre on your left. On this stretch of the pathway, you will see three mosaic panels set into the pavement. These are by Alan Potter and are designed to highlight the three types of power on which the navigation bargemen relied; horse, wind and manpower.

Beyond the three mosaic panels, pass a few properties on your left and then turn right to cross the large green footbridge over the river. Half way across this bridge, pause and look to your left. Rising from the water you will see a stainless steel sculpture, Mast and Sail by William Lasdun. At the far side, turn immediately left along the paved path. Stay on the path closest to the river (on your left), which leads you between the National Centre for Craft and Design on your right and the old wharf area across to your left.

Sleaford's old wharf area has undergone considerable regeneration in recent years and a converted 1880s seed warehouse occupies pride of place as the National Centre for Craft and Design. It contains two galleries, workshop spaces, a fine craft shop, a cafe and the office base of the artsNK team. The rooftop gallery is well worth a visit, giving stunning panoramic views over Sleaford and the surrounding countryside.

9 → 10 Old Wharf to End



Bear right to pass the main entrance for the National Centre for Craft and Design on your right, heading into Navigation Yard. Bear left to pass Navigation House on your right and follow the pedestrian walkway swinging right to pass the front of Navigation House. Formerly the Navigation Company offices dating from 1838, the building is now a heritage centre. Look out for the coat of arms above the door, now badly eroded the company motto once read *Leve Fit Quod Bene Furtor Onus*, which translates as *A Heavy Burden Correctly Carried Becomes Light*.

You will emerge to a junction with Carre Street. Cross over to the far pavement and turn right along this to reach St Deny's Church ahead, the final destination of our walk. Having started beneath the grandeur of Lincoln Cathedral, the Spires and Steeples Trail ends fittingly in the shadow of St Deny's, another of Lincolnshire's magnificent churches which stands guard over the market place. The steeple contains the oldest part of the church (circa 1180) and is an early example of a broach spire. Two important features are the communion rails designed by Sir Christopher Wren and a William Morris window in the south aisle known as the Angels and Oranges.

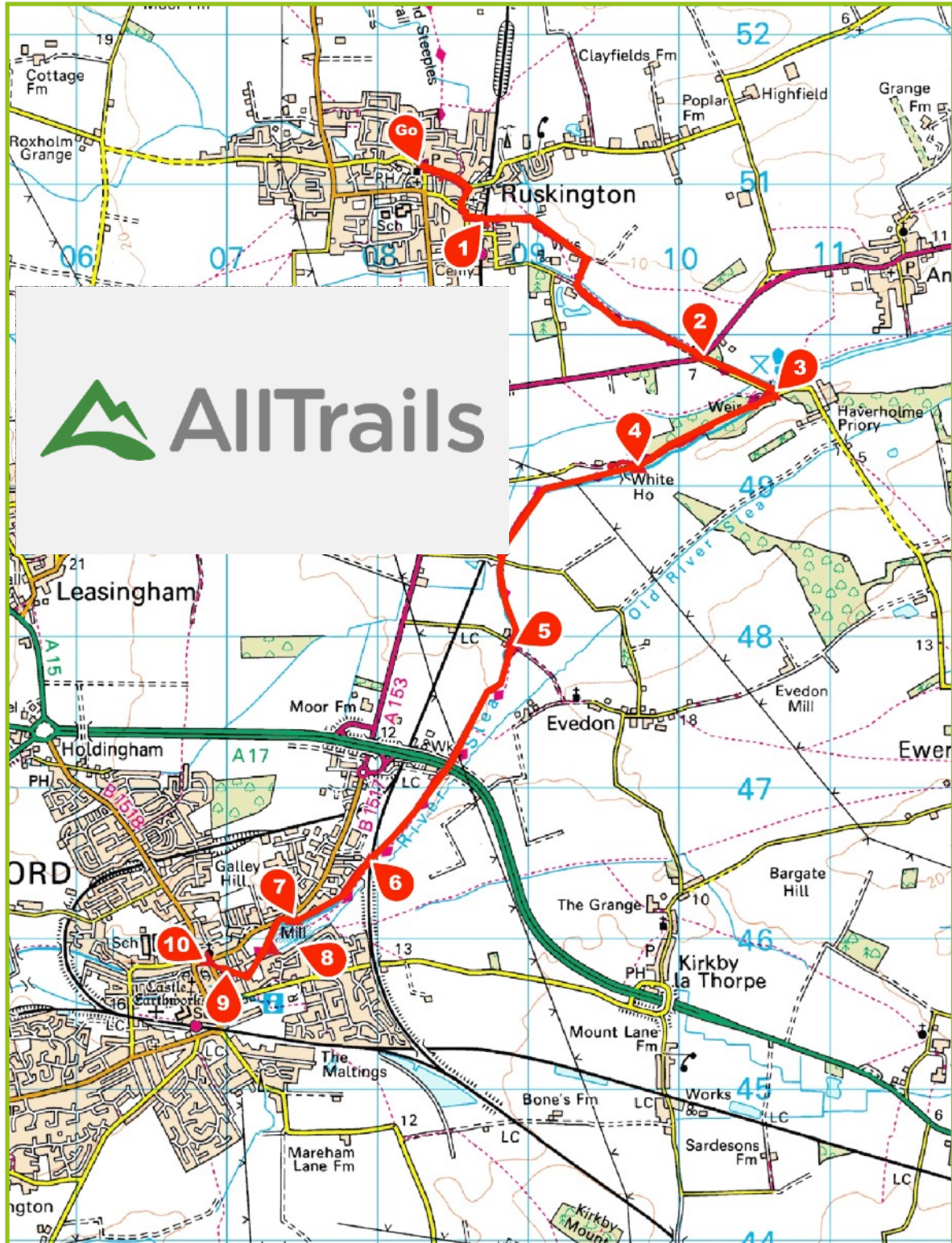


Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and a map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.



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