

B.A HONS ARCHAEOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE HISTORY

# Life and Death of a Fenland Port

**A Major Project on the History of Spalding Port**



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**Contents**

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	2
1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Methodology	4
3.0 A Brief History of the Town of Spalding	6
4.0 Maritime and Associated Industries in Spalding	19
5.0 Spalding Port, through Life and Death	27
6.0 Remains of the Port	36
7.0 Further Recommendations	42
8.0 Conclusion	44
References	46
Illustration References	49
Bibliography	51

**Appendices****Appendix 1 - HER Records**

*Abstract: What follows is a comprehensive study of a subject that until now has seen relatively little research, this being the port of Spalding in Lincolnshire. It looks at the history of the port from its very earliest origins through to its subsequent demise. Not only does it examine the history of the port, but it also examines the ports role within the town itself and how it helped to shape Spalding into the town it is today. It looks at the industries that grew up around the port and how they too suffered from the same periods of prosperity and decline.*

**Acknowledgements**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Before railways were as widespread as they are today, the primary ways of transporting goods were via roads and waterways. Transporting goods by road however was long, arduous and dangerous. In the winter the roads became quagmires and carts would become stuck, while the journey itself became perilous and in the summer the roads would dry out and become cracked and rutted, making it once again almost impossible to transport goods by cart. As such, goods were largely transported by pack animal, but this was a slow process and expensive. These factors made the transportation of goods via the various rivers and waterways around the country the easiest and most cost affective method. Due to the heavy traffic on the rivers, many towns began to take advantage of this fact, creating quays and acting as distribution and loading centres. Spalding was one such town, the history of its port possibly dating as far back as the Roman period. It has fluctuated in terms of importance and use over the years, however this project examines the final years of the port, from 1700 up to early 1900's, through its busiest period up until its demise.

## 2.0 **Methodology**

In order to undertake a comprehensive study of the final years and subsequent demise of Spalding's port a variety of sources, both primary and secondary were consulted and an interdisciplinary approach had to be taken. This consisted of consulting the archaeological record in terms of the HER and looking at standing archaeology in the form of remaining buildings. Consulting the social and local history of the town was also an important factor in the production of this project, as in a few cases some of the things contained within this report were still within living memory of some of the residents of the town and because of this there are sources such as newspaper articles that can be consulted. However as this is a subject that has previously been relatively untouched, there is little in the way of academic texts that can be referred to. Key texts that are available for research are primarily Clark's '*Spalding - The evolution of a fenland town*', Wright's '*Spalding an industrial history*' and Gooch's '*A History of Spalding.*' There are also problems that arise when consulting Gooch's book, as he can be considered as an antiquarian rather than a historian and as such did not reference where information was gathered from. However his book is still a valuable collection of information, but it must be used with care and the consideration that comes from using such a source. As previously stated, a large amount of information on the later years of the port came from articles from magazines and newspaper cuttings archived at the Spalding Gentleman's Society and the Spalding Library. Photographs, paintings and maps also helped to give a graphic representation of the chronological changes of the port and these were compared to photographs of the area of

the port as it is seen today. Contemporary directories were also consulted in order to ascertain information about the amount of individuals in the town that were associated with the maritime industry over a series of years, however this too must be used with caution as these directories may not always be truly accurate as Morris [2005] states when discussing Higgs book *'Making Sense of the Census Revisited'* where he says that;

*'Sometimes people simply got things wrong. Many did not know their age or place of birth. Others would mislead, thinking that the document might be used to check up on a child working under age.'*

As such these directories will be used with caution as the figures gained from them may not be wholly accurate, however they will still be used as they do provide a valuable source of information. It was the cumulative information gathered from these sources that helped to create a comprehensive study.

### 3.0 A Brief History of the Town of Spalding

The town of Spalding [see figure 1 below], situated along the River Welland and not far from the wash, has a long and rich history, stretching back to the Roman period, when the marshes that surrounded the area were exploited for the purpose of salt making.

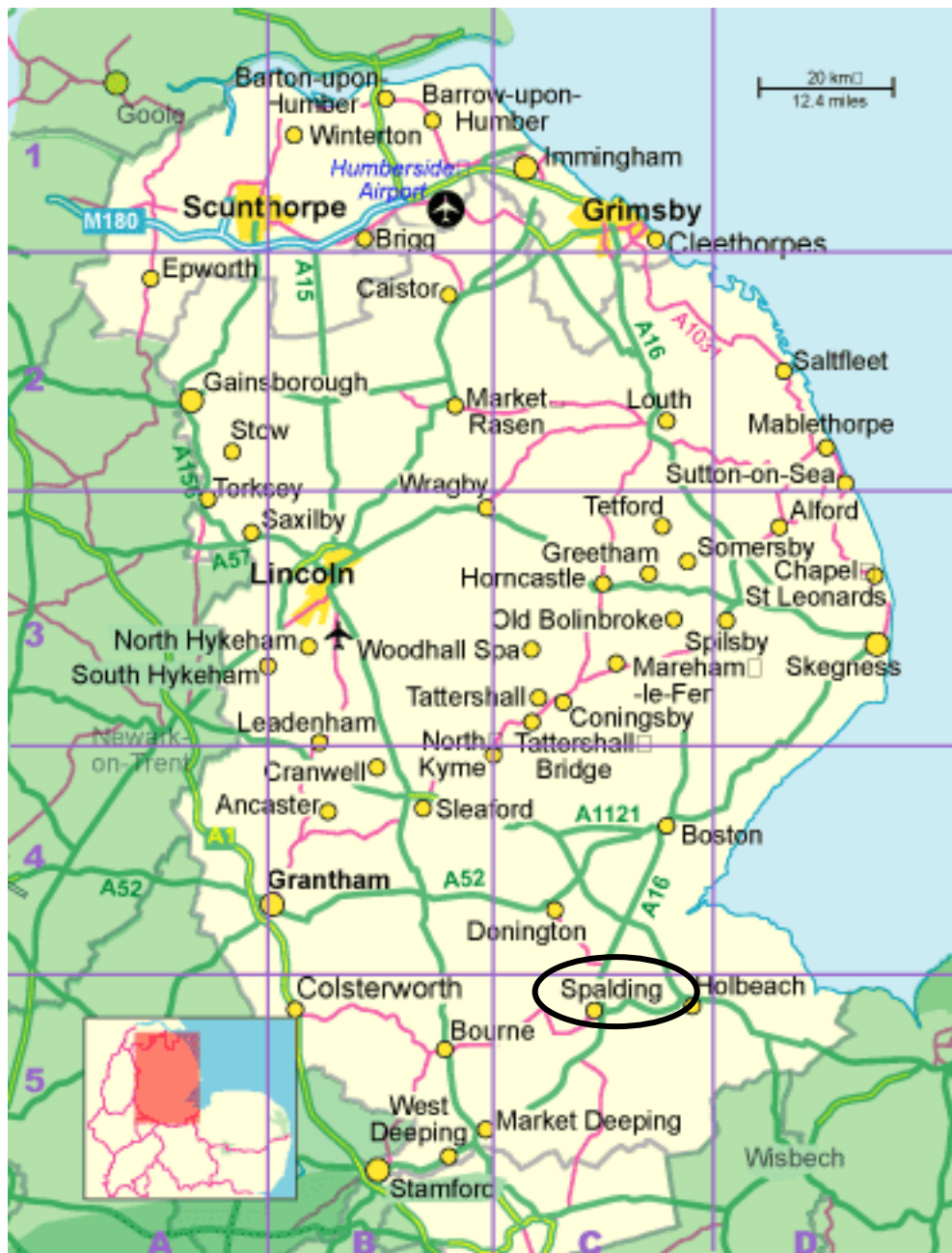


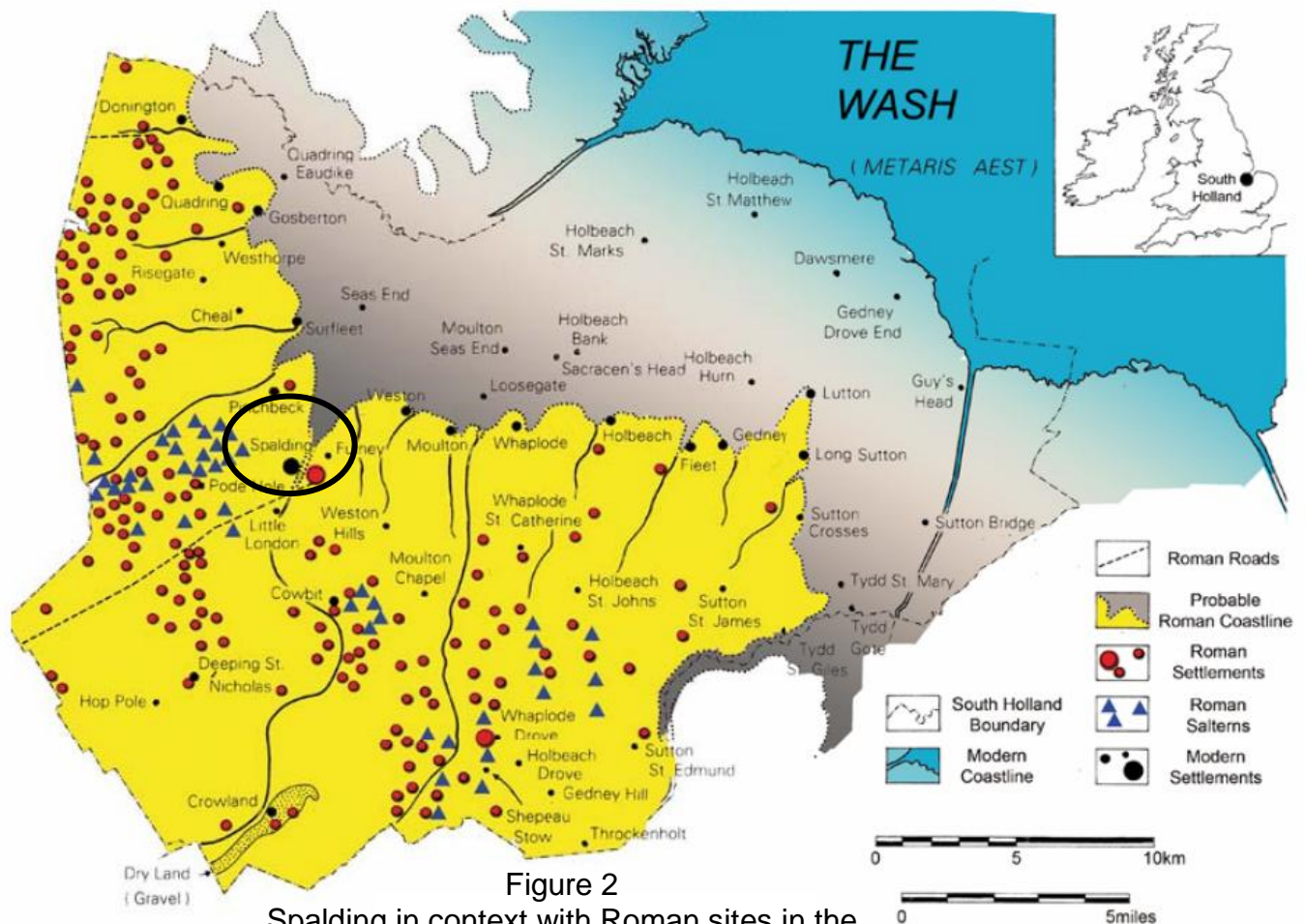
Figure 1  
Spalding in relation to Lincolnshire today  
Grid Reference - TF245225



Located in a fenland area, Spalding has a rich, yet widely unexplored history for such a small town. The reasons for this lack of evidence for the early town will be discussed later. Evidence of habitation can be found as far back as the Roman period [see figure 2, pg8], although it would not be far fetched to speculate that there was perhaps habitation before this time. With the town being on the River Welland and so close to the Wash, it would have been relatively easy to import and export goods to and from other settlements in the area [South Holland District Council, 2009]. The Roman habitation of the town was linked to the industrial activity of salt making and there is evidence of this in and around the town such as at Wygate Park, where in 2005 two salt production sites were discovered along with a settlement, possibly linked to the salt making industry [Cope-Faulkner et al., 2010]. The main Roman road in Lincolnshire, the Baston Outgang, headed towards Spalding and as Cope-Faulkner [et al, 2010] states, it has been hinted that the location of the road or the port, or possibly both, may be because of the town, as;

*'It is believed that there was a major Roman port situated where Spalding is now, as tantalising evidence appears here in the form of Roman pottery and coins.'*

Now however, much of the Roman remains are hidden beneath layers of silt laid down by later flooding around 400AD to 500AD so documentation and investigation into this period is ongoing [Cope-Faulkner et al., 2010], however because of this factor it limits the depth of knowledge available on the very early history of the port.



After the departure of the Romans, Spalding changed greatly and as stated there was wide scale flooding which covered or destroyed much of the town, leaving little in the way of Roman archaeology. The most notable feature after this period was the construction of the Spalding Priory. Founded in 1051 by Thorold de Bokenhale, it was a Benedictine priory and at the time a cell of Crowland Abbey. During this period Ivo Tailbois, the nephew and standard bearer of William the Conqueror during the Battle of Hastings, married the Countess Lucy. He was granted a manor and became lord of the small town and it's surrounding lands, building a wooden castle with moat and drawbridge, of which no remains can be found today [Clark, 1978]. After the

conquest, Ivo extended his influence across the town to include the priory, as can be seen in a recently conducted study on the priory's history in which Buck [2009, pg 4] states that;

*'Ivo had no regard for the Saxons, and drove the monks of Spalding back to their own abbey and introduced monks from the Benedictine Priory of St. Nicholas at Angiers (Angers) France.'*

Up until the dissolution, the priory seems to have been one of the primary powerhouses in the area, covering a site of around 30 acres in around 1200. Under a succession of priors, the town of Spalding prospered and evidence of this prosperity can be seen in the fact that Spalding appears to be the only town in the area with a market in 1086 and one of only a few recorded in the Domesday book. It was also in 1086 that Spalding first appears in the Domesday Book as 'Spallinge'. The Domesday Book shows that at this time the majority of the economy for the early town came from fishing and a large amount still came from salt production [Hinde, 1997].

It was most likely around the 13th century that Spalding developed as a port. With the prosperity of the town continuing thanks largely to the Priory and the now established market, trade and the import and export of goods, people and ideas would have been on the increase. As previously stated in section 1.0, the best way of transporting things in and out of the town would have been via the River Welland and also most likely the River Westlode, which was an old man made drainage channel, as Wright [1973, pg 2] states that the Westlode

*'...was also a main route for people and goods from the Bourne area to Spalding...'* and in addition to this Clark [1978, pg 5] states that;

*'There was communication by water with Crowland along the Welland..., with Bourne, possibly along the Westlode or the River Glen, and by sea with Boston, Hull and the north east coast, and London and the south east coast.'*

With the prosperity that Spalding was experiencing under the help of the Priory, the tenants of the town rose almost six-fold, from 73 in 1086 to 421 in 1260. Spalding was becoming a town of collection and distribution for the surrounding area as Clark [1978, pg 5] records that *'A wide range of products was carried, mainly by water, and many of them passed through or came to the market at Spalding.'* Herring were particularly noteworthy, as during this period, the Priory had its own fleet which caught large amounts of herring that were then landed at a quay in what is now Herring Lane [see figure 3, pg11].

It was in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, around 1450 that one of the most well known buildings in Spalding was built. Ayscoughfee Hall was most likely built by Sir Richard Aldwyn, a rich wool merchant, along the banks of the River Welland. This large medieval manor still stands, albeit having been added to and changed over the years, however the old structure of the original house can still be seen in places such as the undercroft. This undercroft would have offered a direct entrance onto the River Welland and it can be imagined that boats carrying wool and other goods destined for Ayscoughfee Hall would be

moored on the river and the goods then unloaded and carried straight into the undercroft for storage.

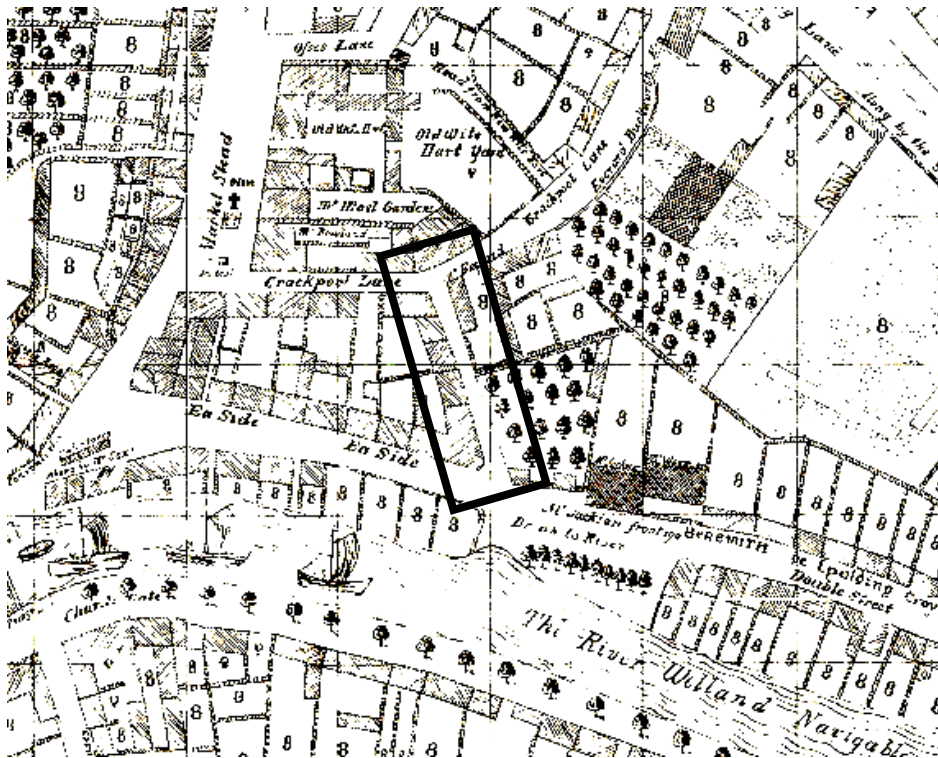


Figure 3

Grundy's 1732 map of Spalding showing Herring Lane and its context to the River Welland

It is not long after this that the town experienced a more troublesome time in the wake of the dissolution of the monasteries, however much of the information from this period must be speculated upon as there is little documentation from the period as stated by Clark [1978, pg 7] when he says that;

*'...little is known about the town in this century. It can be fairly assumed, though, that it remained as a local collecting and distributing centre for the produce of the surrounding area...'*

After the Reformation there seems to have been a transitional period before stable land ownership was re-established. Spalding would have probably

suffered quite badly when the priory was dissolved as it was one of the leading landowners in the town and this can be seen in the fact that in 1563, twenty-four years after the dissolution, there were only 154 households in Spalding. It is most likely that after the monks were evicted, what was once well tended farmland became neglected and there was a period of stagnation within the town [Clark, 1978]. It would seem as though this blacker period in the town's history began to abate at the beginning of the seventeenth century as the number of houses in 1619 had risen back up to 288, most likely reflecting a return to stability.

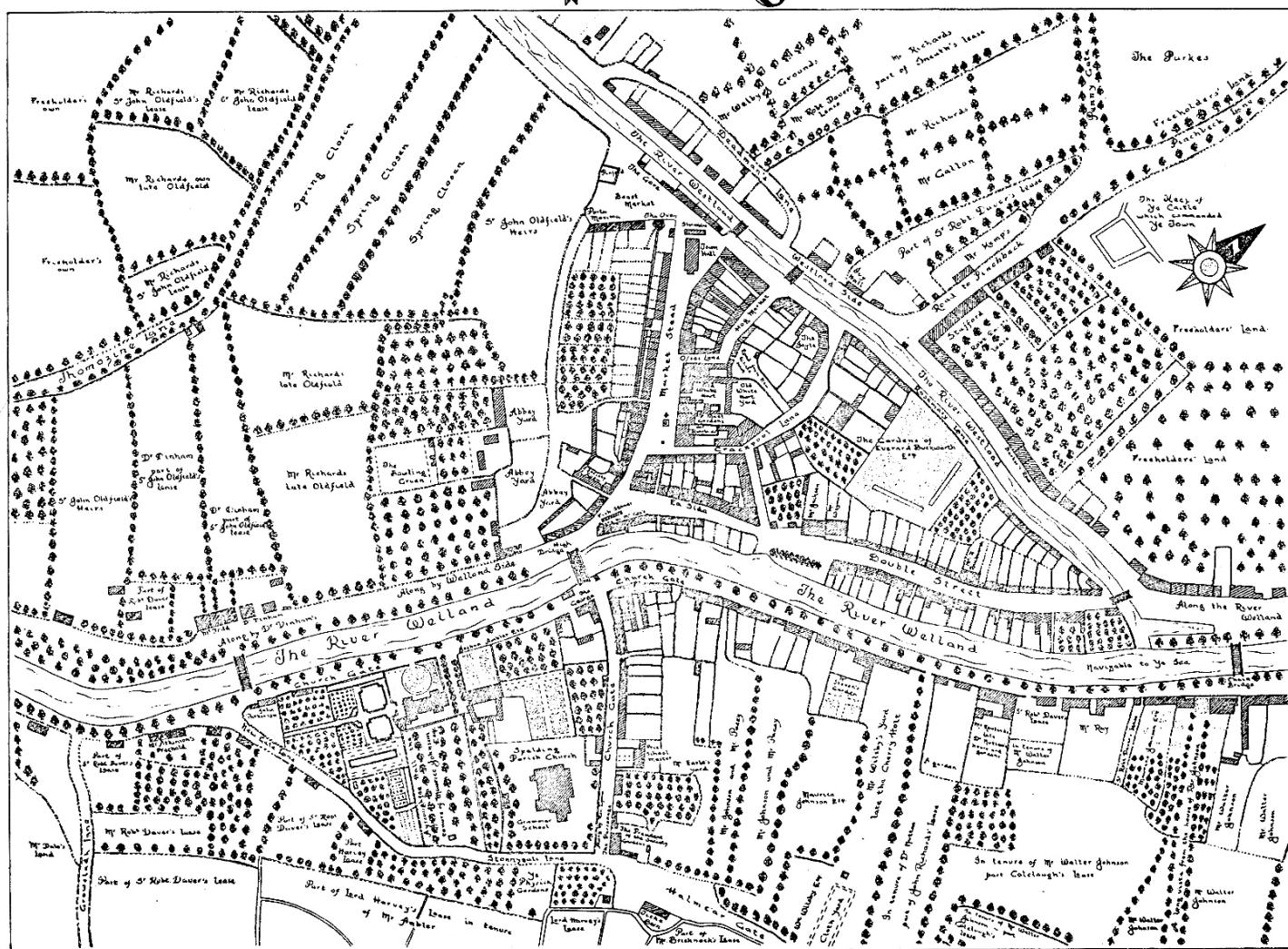
One thing it would seem that can be ascertained about the town at the time is that the port was already suffering difficulties, as in 1634 visitors to Spalding commented in dismay on the state of the River Welland. Over the next 40 or so years however, the port greatly benefited from various schemes to widen the river and help drainage in the area. This can be seen in works carried out in 1634 and later work that was carried out between 1664 and 1674. The 1634 works were carried out because of a decree issued by the Court of Sewers that was designed not to improve the navigation of the Welland but rather, it was primarily part of a larger plan to drain Deeping Fen. This work was carried out because, as Clark [1978, pg7] states '*...the main outlet for excess water from the Fen was via the Welland.*' However although this may have been the primary reason for the works, the port would have undoubtedly benefited from it. The 1664 to 1674 works were carried out to further drainage efforts of Deeping Fen with the end goal being that 10,000 acres would be drained in that area. As with the earlier works, the drainers needed to keep

the Welland clear and navigable so once again the port and associated maritime activities would have benefited [Clark 1978].

It was in the 18th century that Spalding experienced a great change. By this point in time it was beginning to be widely recognised that drainage of the fens would vastly improve and transform the fens for the better, providing a more stable farming environment that would no longer be subjected to periodic inundations of flooding and that this in turn would provide a more stable economy for farmers. It could be safe to say that the merchants and farmers of Spalding would have been well aware of the benefits that this drainage scheme would have brought, not only in terms of agriculture and an increased productivity, but also in the fact that in order to carry out the drainage, improvements would also need to be made to the Welland. It was also during the 18th century, in 1710, that the Gentlemen's Society of Spalding was formed and while their primary aims were social and cultural, such as scientific and literary subjects, they would probably have had an interest in the trade and commerce of the town [Clark 1978]. It was one of the Gentlemen's Society members, John Grundy, that produced a detailed map of Spalding in 1732 [see figure 4, pg14] that was then presented to the Society. It is this map that shows that the majority of information on the structure of the town can be gathered. For example it shows that the greatest proportion of houses were still along the Market Place - Church Street axis but other areas of settlement were beginning to appear. These new areas of settlement were along Double Street and High Street and also along the Westlode.



# Map of — Spalding — in 1732.



Scale of Feet

Based on the Map by John Grundy —  
Mathematics Teacher at the Grammar  
School, Spalding at that time.

Figure 4  
John Grundy's map of Spalding  
1732

The reason for this settlement would most likely have been because of the port as they were near the sites of the old quays, possibly showing that these areas of housing were for individuals associated with the port such as mariners or merchants. Double Street may have gained its name from the fact that it was the only riverside road in town that had houses on both sides.



Houses became more sporadic after High Bridge as sea-faring ships could not pass any further, possibly showing that habitation was primarily around the area of the port. By this point there are around 380 houses within the town, this showing a moderate increase during the last century and from this it could be said that this showed that Spalding was economically and commercially stable in its position as a collection and distribution centre based around the port. As well as the towns merchants dealing in goods ferrying in and out of the town on the river, they also dealt in local goods and as Clark [1978, pg9] states, there were also five annual fairs held on;

*‘...April 27 (stock, hemp and flax), June 29 (stock, hemp, flax and horses), August 25 (horses), September 25 (horned cattle and other stock, hemp, flax and other merchandise), and on December 6 (general).’*

This is another factor that could back up the stability of Spalding’s position as a collection and distribution centre, as in order to hold such fairs as these there would need to be sufficient interest and people coming into the town to make them financially feasible. It is likely that although it was the port that had helped Spalding become a prosperous town, it was also perhaps the factor that was limiting the growth of the town. This is because the primary mode of transport at the time was, as previously stated, by water and this was laborious and slow. The Welland could also be very changeable and several attempts were made by merchants and landowners after 1750 to instigate changes to improve the channel however there was little success. It was also during the 18th and early 19th century that the road systems in and around

Spalding were improved due to the increasingly clear view that the town could benefit from the drainage of the fens, but in order to truly benefit from the drainage, it had been imperative that the roads underwent the improvements.

This drainage was a major part in the history of Spalding and in the history of the fens in general and between 1700 and 1850, most of the fens were drained and an agricultural production system and as already stated, road improvements for communications were set about. It is possible to see how this affected Spalding by looking at the population within the town between 1801 and 1851. As can be seen from Table 1, over a period of 50 years

<b><i>Population of Spalding</i></b>	
<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>
1801	3296
1811	4330
1821	5207
1831	6497
1841	7778
1851	8829

Table 1  
Population of Spalding between 1801 and  
1851 as taken from Clarks '*Spalding - The  
evolution of a fenland town*' 1978

Spalding experienced a population increase of 5533 people, however Clark's maps [see figures 5 and 6, pg17] of Spalding in 1732 and 1850 show little in the way of urban spread. So it was that, as Clark [1978, pg15] states Spalding was;

*'... transformed from a quiet, spacious town and port, with a population of probably under 2000, into a cramped, insanitary, but vigorous trading centre for a fertile agricultural area, with nearly 9000 inhabitants.'*

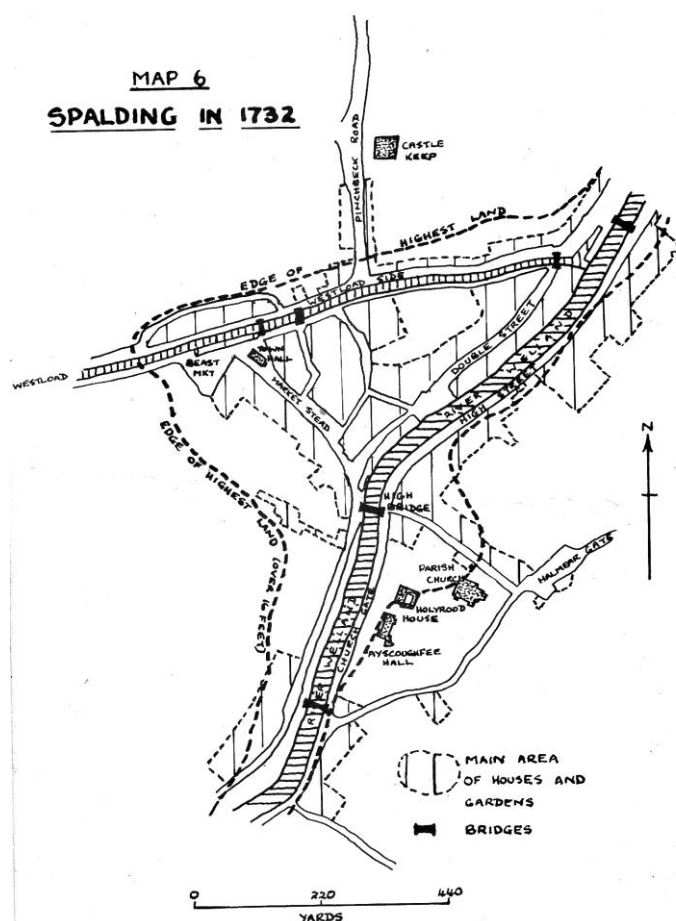


Figure 5

Clark's 1732 map of Spalding showing area of urban sprawl

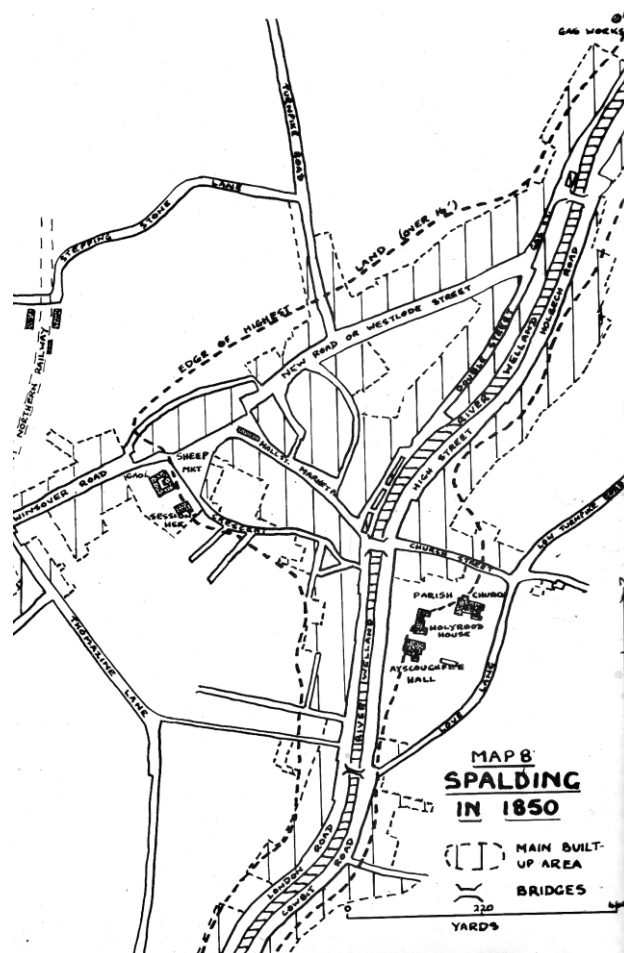


Figure 6

Clark's 1850 map of Spalding showing area of urban sprawl

This now cramped yet prosperous town owed its prosperity primarily to the drainage of the fens, but its wealth came from trade and the port, along with other ancillary industries such as rope making, boat building and grain milling. It was during this time that the essential character of the town was established and this can still be seen in many places, especially along the river itself where warehouses and the like can still be seen. It was from the mid 19th century that the port of Spalding suffered its greatest blow and a new adversary that would contribute towards its final demise. This was the time of the railways. The railway arrived in Spalding in 1848 and it heralded a time of hardship for the port and as Wright [1973, pg7] states, after the first railways

opened; *'they gradually absorbed almost the whole of Spalding's carrying and coastal trade in corn, coal, etc.'* After this there was a flurry of construction which meant that by the end of the 1860's Spalding had good rail connections with not only the surrounding area, but also beyond. The railway did not completely herald the immediate end of the port, as flood prevention schemes required that the Welland be maintained and this ensured that boats could still navigate the river, boats such the one in plate 1 [see below]. In 1856 it was possible for barges as large as 50 or 60 tonnes to reach Spalding [Wright 1973]. Maritime trade was beginning to decline however and Wright [1973, pg 7] states that;

*'The river trade gradually declined in the latter half of the nineteenth century despite occasional optimistic hopes of a revival. For example, it was said in 1892 that 'the shipping trade on the river has lately revived to a considerable extent.'*

The port and its business however slowly decreased until finally, in 1939, the port was dead [Clark 1978].

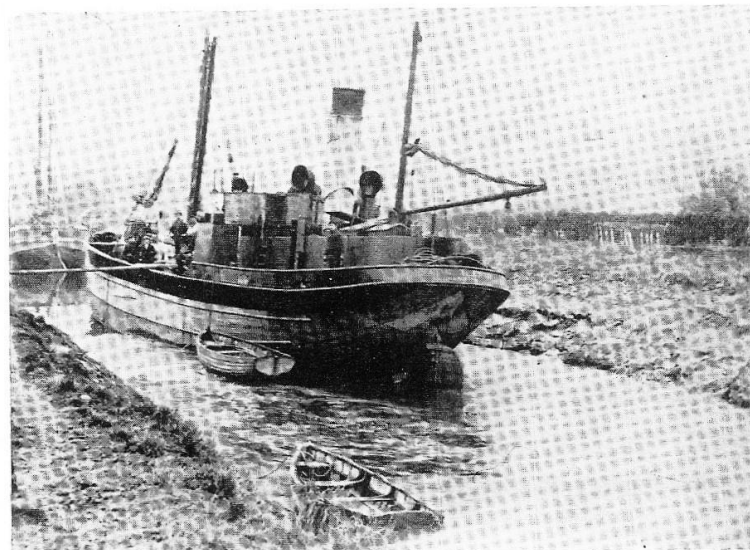


Plate 1  
An ocean going steamer aground in the Welland River

#### **4.0 Maritime and Associated Industries in Spalding**

As already stated Spalding had a rich maritime history thanks to its port. Not only would merchants have benefited from import and export, there would also have been the mariners and boat and sloop owners that lived within the town and the tradesmen that would have built businesses to fuel the port. These would have included such industries as rope and sail makers or ships chandlers who would have sold supplies for the actual ships. Boat makers were always present in Spalding and this will be discussed further in this section. Other professions not associated with producing goods for the maritime industry included harbour masters, customs agents and ship insurers. These various industries and jobs changed and fluctuated over the years, with less or more people filling positions and this could be said to help show periods of prosperity and decline in the port and subsequently in the town itself. In order to see what professions were present in Spalding that were associated with the port and the maritime industry, White's and Kelly's Directories of Lincolnshire were consulted over an 88 year period between 1842 and 1930. Table 2 [see pg20] shows the results gathered from these directories and show how the number of individuals change and fluctuate. Here it can be seen that the largest number of individuals were the boat owners and master mariners. Master mariners were individuals who held the highest qualification of certificate, this meaning that they could command a vessel of any size or power in any geographical location. Not included in this were sailors and seamen and these were not noted in the Directories, so as such the true amount of seamen that would have worked on vessels coming in and out of Spalding that lived within the town could not be discovered.

Profession	Year											
	1842	1849	1856	1872	1876	1882	1885	1892	1896	1913	1922	1930
Master mariners/ Boat owners	21	18	21	21	13	10	10	15	5	1	1	-
Boat Builders	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1
Ship chandlers [Sail maker/Marine store dealer etc.]	1	1	1	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wharfingers	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ship insurer	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Harbour master	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Customs agent	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shipping agent	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total No. Individuals	25	23	26	27	15	14	12	17	7	2	3	2

Table 2

Table showing the numbers of individuals in maritime associated professions between 1842 and 1930 as gathered from White's and Kelly's Directories of Lincolnshire

The other consistency found within the directories was that of the boat builders. Perhaps the most prosperous of boat builders in Spalding was that of a Mr John Pannell. He set up his boat building business due to the fact that until that point there were no facilities to repair any damage that may occur to the towns vessels. And so it was that the captains and vessel owners expressed their concerns and John Pannell, who was at that time the owner of the 'Jolly Crispin' public house on the side of the river, applied to the River Welland Trustees for permission to build a slipway. In Elsdon's [2001, pg152] book '*More Aspects of Spalding*' he includes an extract of minutes from the River Welland Trustees' meeting on Monday 17th April, 1837 that states they;

*'Received a memorial from the owners and captains of the vessels trading up the River Welland, praying the Trustees would grant to John Pannell permission to lay a slip in the River Welland bank, for hauling up vessels for the purpose of repair. Resolved that the desired permission be granted upon such terms as the Clerk shall think advisable, and that the slip be laid down, under the superintendence of the Harbour Master...'*

The slipway was then duly laid down and John Pannell carried on working there until his death in 1843 [see plates 2 and 3, pg22]. After his death his son, Ellis Pannell, took over until he passed away in 1888 and then Joseph E. Pannell returned to take over the business, who had at one point helped his brother but then moved to Boston in order to gain more experience [Elsdon, 2001]. As with any successful business, it will most always attract competition, as was such in the case of Pannell's boat yard that in the following years a Mr

Smith Dring was also given permission to open another slip. Smith Dring worked primarily on the repair of lighters of which there were a large number up and down the river as far as Stamford and also to the Peakirk gravel pits so that they could bring gravel to the town for road repairs. It can be assumed then that Dring set up his boat building and repair business only a few years after Pannell set up his business, as in the 1842 Directory 2 boat building businesses are recorded.



Plate 2  
Pannell's Boat Yard on the River Welland

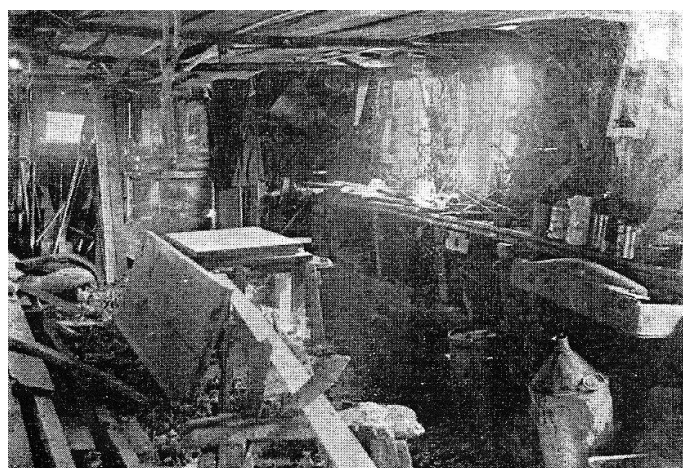


Plate 3  
The disorderly interior of Pannell's workshop

Although these may have been the two most prosperous and well known boat builders in Spalding's maritime history, they were not the earliest. The earliest boat yard in Spalding was around 1792 and was owned by Thomas Goodwin. Originally it was situated on London Road, in front of Welland Hall and near to the Welland Cottage public house. Thomas Goodwin specialised primarily in small craft and carried out an extensive trade due to the fact that it was the only establishment of its kind in the town. In 1805 his son, Richard Goodwin, moved the business to new premises on Marsh Road. By 1846 however it had changed hands to Robert Richardson and a Captain Edward Todd Richardson



then came to the yard to learn his trade, but after spending some time there he returned to Kings Lynn to his fathers boat yard, however when this declined he returned to Spalding and became a part owner of the small coasting vessel the *Aurora* which he proceeded to captain. The *Aurora* was built in his brother's boat yard and was launched on 25th September 1847 [Pierce 1978]. Along with these boatyards there was, for a short period, another operated by Joseph White between 1830 and 1842.

Sailmakers were another feature of this port town. Not only would this have been a lucrative business to be in, it would also have been relatively easy to procure the raw materials needed, as hemp and flax were grow within the immediate area [Wright, 1973]. One of the first sailmakers in the town was in 1749 and Wright [1973, pg11] states that;

*'...a 'sail-cloth manufactory' was established in 1749 by a Mr Ives but this had closed down by 1792, when Hawkes referred to it as 'an attempt to make sacking and mill sail cloths.'*

The fact that mill sail cloths were mentioned indicates that Mr Ives may also have been creating sails, not only for the barges that passed through the port, but also for the many windmills that were in the fenland area and it would be feasible to think that he would also have made sacking to transport many of the goods that were transported up and down the Welland. After this there were but a few in the first half of the nineteenth century, however in 1826,

there was a John Best on High Bridge and in 1842 there was a Henry Gustard on Holbeach Road, both of who were sailmakers.

Another common feature of port towns were rope makers. Like sails, rope was an essential part of any port and would undoubtedly have been a presence in any port town. The first rope maker in Spalding was around 1792 and belonged to William Cockett, who's ropewalk stretched from St. Thomas' Road to London Road, however this shut down in 1979. The second rope maker in the town was Ann Hames, whose ropewalk was also running in 1792. The Hames' family were rope makers throughout the nineteenth century, with Joseph and William Hames also having ropewalks around 1826. A further William Hames had a ropewalk in 1882 and 1892 and this was situated near the gas works along the riverbank [see figure 7, pg 25]. Wright [1973, pg11] states that in 1826;

*'...there were altogether six ropewalks listed in White's Directory, indicating a prosperous port, but the number declined over the next thirty years. By 1856 only one old ropemaker was still in business...'*

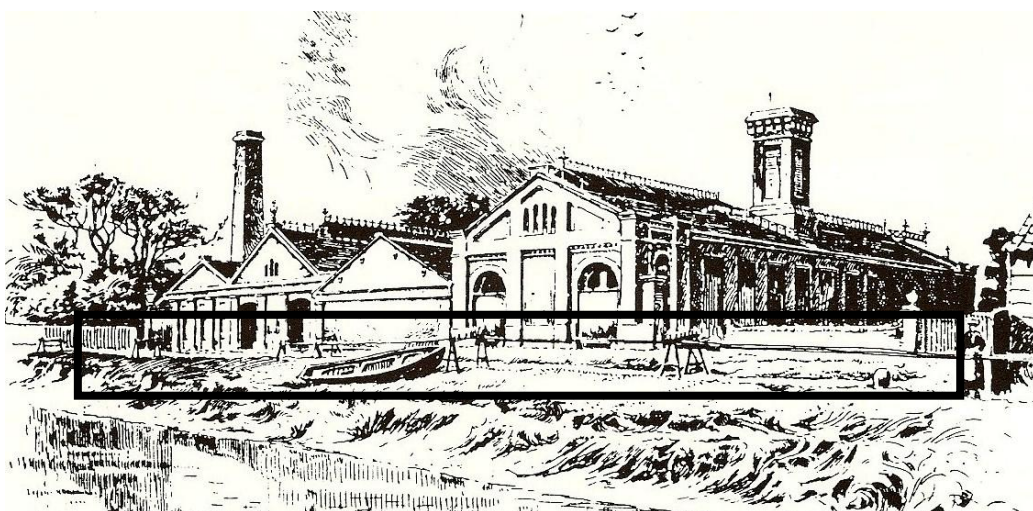


Figure 7  
Spalding gas works with William Hames' ropewalk highlighted in the foreground along the riverbank

So although rope making would have been a prosperous business in a busy port town, it would also have suffered when the port underwent periods of demise.

Along with these industries that were directly linked with the port and shipping, the chandlers and boat builders for example, there were other industries that were fuelled by the port. An early example of this would be the previously mentioned fish industry, an example of this being Spalding Priory's herring fleet [Buck, 2009]. Grundy's map [see figure 8 below] also shows fish stalls located near High Bridge. Another industry that would have relied on the port and ships coming into Spalding would have been the gas works. The gas works were originally erected in 1832 by a George Malam on the side of the River Welland at the north end of Albion street. A quay was constructed in

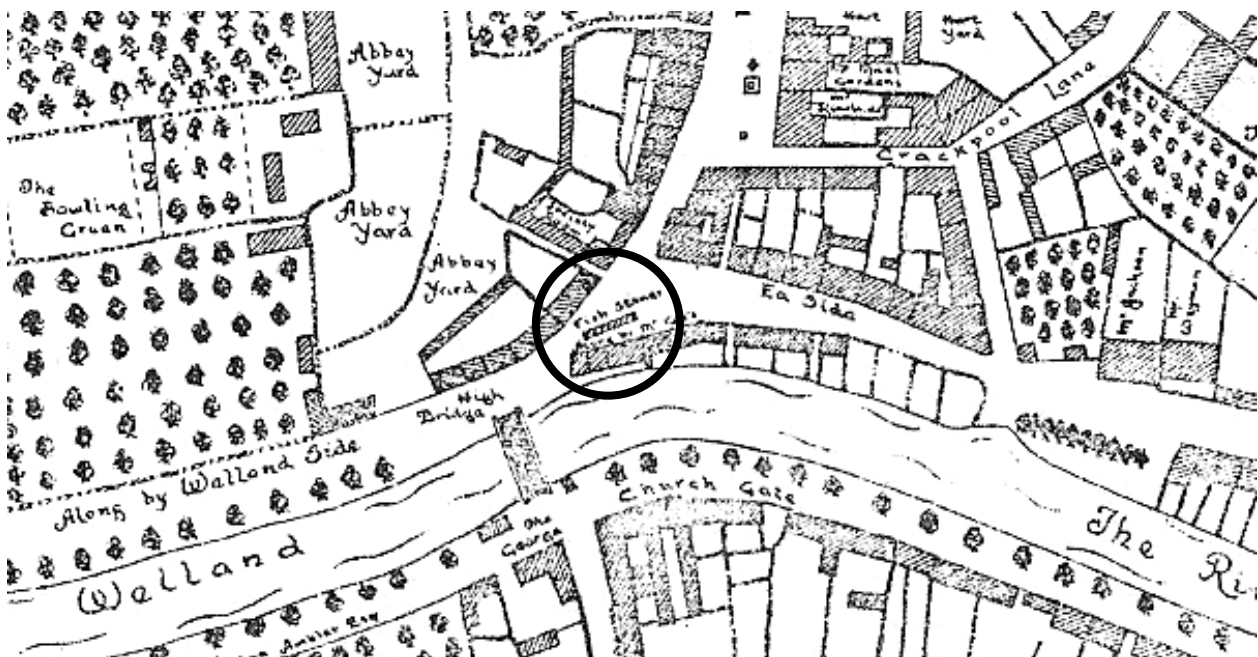


Figure 8

Grundy's map showing fish stalls located near to High Bridge and Herring Lane that adjoins Crackpool Lane

front of the gas works in order to allow for the offloading of coal from barges on the river [see plates 4 and 5 below]. Malam eventually went bankrupt and the works were purchased by Ashley Maples and W Croskill of Beverley and Wright [1973 pg52] states that in 1850 they;

*‘...produced about four million cubic feet of gas which they sold at 7s 6d per thousand cubic feet... by 1856 they had reduced the price to 6s 3d.’*

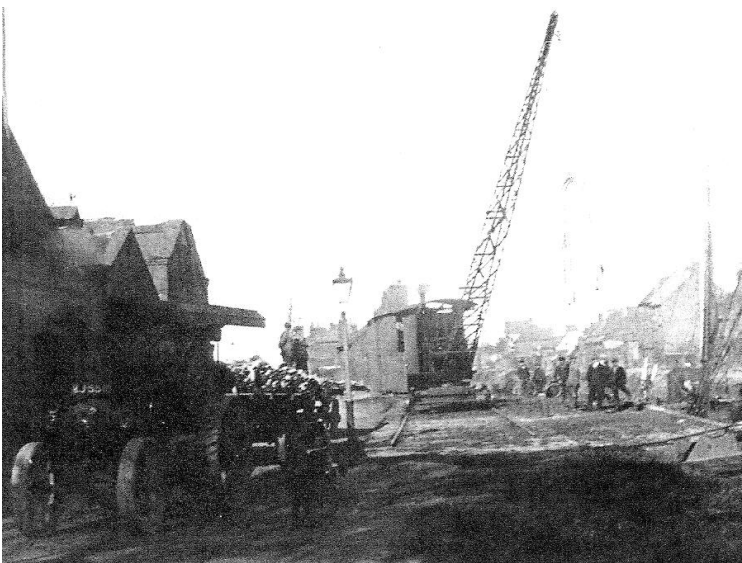


Plate 4

A crane outside the gas works unloading coal from a barge on the River Welland

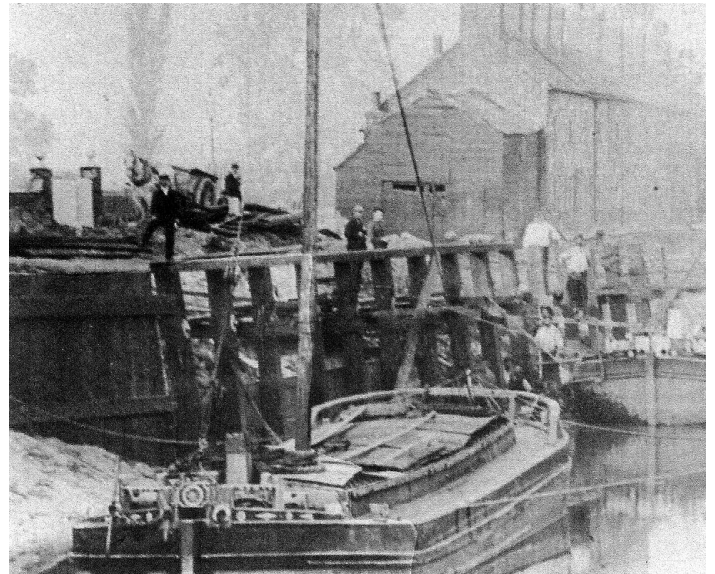


Plate 5

Boats moored outside the gas works alongside the River Welland

It is these industries that flourished and struggled along side the port as it suffered from its own periods of prosperity and decline. As can be seen from table 2, these professions ultimately suffered in the final years of the port and from the early twentieth century there were few boat and sloop owners or master mariners present within the town and very little in terms of associated professions.

## **5.0 Spalding Port, through Life and Death**

This section will look at the glory years of the port through to its ultimate demise in 1939. While it is now thought that the port may have its origins as far back as the roman period, it was later that it began to flourish. Early mentions of the port are evident around the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when in the 1281 toll list, items such as sacks of wool, firewood, turves, coal and tuns of wine were being shipped down the River Welland to the market at Spalding, whereas Clark [1978, pg5] states that in the 1336 toll list, a much wider range of goods were entering the town including;

*‘...corn, malt, horses, oxen, cattle skins, fresh and salted meat, sheep, cloth of various types, casks of wine, loads of honey, sacks of wool, salt, steel, cheese, butter and fish, including herrings.’*

This is evidence of an increase in trade and usage of the river, but it could also be assumed that the size of vessel was increasing due to the need to ship items such as livestock that is present in the 1336 toll listings. Another assumption that could be made is that with the large amount and variety of goods that were at the time being imported into the town, the port was by this point perhaps well established and maintained, the heart of Spalding’s new position as a collection and distribution centre for the area.

Little is known of the town in the fifteenth century, however it could be relatively safely assumed that it continued to be an important centre of distribution and collection due to its position in the wider landscape, for

example sheep and cattle along with wool, hemp and flax from the immediate surroundings, but also due to its location near East Anglia and West Riding, making it convenient to export wool to these manufacturing areas. However it was not long after this period, in 1634, that it was noted that the port was beginning to suffer. Visitors to Spalding were noted in Clark's [1978, pg7] book as saying that;

*'...travellers passing through Spalding reported that not only was the bridge over the Welland 'pulled down', but that 'the river had not soe much water in it, as would drown a mouse'.'*

It was also in this year however, that the ports saving grace appeared in the form of a series of schemes. The first of these was a decree that was granted in 1632 by the Court of Sewers to widen the River Welland to 40 feet between Deeping St. James and Fosdyke. This project was carried out in 1634 by six hundred men, however it was not done with the primary aim of making navigation into the town easier. It was in fact carried out as part of a much larger plan to drain Deeping Fen, an area that had long since been closely associated with Spalding as the main outlet for water excess from the fenland was via that of the River Welland. Although this project was not carried out in order to improve the Welland for navigation and in turn help the port, it would undoubtedly have had a positive effect on the port. A further project was carried out between 1664 and 1674 as part of a scheme that's main aim was to drain roughly 10,000 acres of Deeping Fen. As with the previous project, the Welland had to be kept clear and as such, the workers had to keep the

banks between Brother House and High Bridge maintained and again the port would have undoubtedly have benefited.

Whilst there may not have been a customs house in Spalding there was however a customs officer who held a silver seal of office which denominated the town as a port, however it was always a port of Boston. It was in 1695 that, as Gooch [1940, pg 219] states;

*'...the merchants, traders, and the principal inhabitants and others of Stamford and Holbeach, petitioned to have this a free port, but the affair was dropped for want of a proper spirit to carry it forward.'*

During this period the town's imports consisted largely of stone, coal, timber, slates, sugar, salt, pitch, tar, resin, glass, beeswax, lead and everyday groceries. French wines were also brought into the town as, at the time there were no high duties on these goods, so these and Spanish wines would have been shipped in via Kings Lynn. Exports consisted of oats, rape, coleseed, line oil, wool and hides. All sea coal that was used in Stamford, Rutland and the Deepings and other goods that needed to be shipped to these places would have passed through Spalding and up the River Welland. Gooch [1940, pg 219] states that at this time there were around;

*'...70 barges and other craft carrying from 10 to 50 or 60 tons, which belonged to the town, besides others which frequently came in from different*

*places on the coast. Vessels of greater burden came no nearer the town than a place called Boston Scalps, distant about 8 to 10 miles...'*

These larger vessels would have then proceeded to unload their cargos at Boston Scalp onto smaller barges that could then bring them down the river to the town. Boston Scalp was a large mud-flat situated in the corner of the Wash where the River Welland and the River Witham flowed together.

Thomas Hawkes, as quoted in Wright [1973, pg7], wrote that in 1792;

*'...goods to be shipped from London to Spalding and adjacent parts were sent on boats for Boston, generally being sent from Mr Perkins from the Gun and Shot Wharf in Southwark or from Stanton's Wharf whence vessel sailed every Tuesday with groceries.'*

These goods would then be landed at Boston Scalp as already stated and transferred to vessels bound for Spalding.

In 1802 there were much the same amount of vessels in the town as there had been at the end of the 17th century, that being around 70, that could carry loads of between 10 and 40 to 60 tons. In the 1820's however, barges of about 40 tons could come to the very centre of the town, while larger vessels could venture no further than Boston Scalp. It is this variation in tonnage that gives a reflection on the constant variable nature of the Welland, but this did not however seem to impact on the trade as, with the enclosure of the commons around Deeping Fen and the now more extensive growing of cereal



crops, the carrying and trade was still extensive, with even more variety being shipped through Spalding [Wright, 1973]. Figure 9 [see below] is an extract from a contemporary newspaper, taken from Gooch's book '*A History of Spalding*', that shows the shipping news for Spalding on 10th July 1818.

#### SPALDING SHIPPING NEWS

THE following were taken from Drakard's *Stamford News*, Friday, July 10th 1818.

##### SPALDING

Arrived.—Welcome Messenger, Dudding, with bricks and tiles; Neptune, Mason, with cobbles; and Samuel and William Lowry, with goods, all from Hull. Three Sisters, Knott, with cobbles, from Blackney and Cley. Union, Turpin, with groceries, etc., from London.

Sailed.—Union, Turpin, and Three Sisters, Knott, both for London, with oats.

Oct. 16th. Arrived.—Alpha, Wilcox, from Sunderland, with coals and glass bottles. John, Acaster, and Rambler, Campbell, both from Hull, with timber. Trial, Burkenshaw, from London, with goods. Welcome Messenger, Dudding, with bricks and tiles; John and Mary Ann, Haley, with Baltic goods, both from Hull. Betsey, Freeman, from Lynn, with timber.

September 4th. Arrived.—Wellington, Johnson, with linseed cakes, and Three Brothers, Canby, with Baltic goods, both from Hull. Industry, Royce, from London, with groceries.

September 18th. Arrived.—Hannah, Broughton; Ebenezer, Rhodes; and William and Ellen, Medgem; all from Hull, with coals and linseed cakes. Neptune, Mason, and Nancy, White, both from London, with goods.

Sailed.—Neptune, Mason, and Hannah, Broughton, both for Hull, with wool. Ann and Elizabeth, Booth, for Lynn, and Nancy, White, for London, both with oats.

The first is the name of the vessel and following is the captain's name. These few extracts give an idea of what goods were imported and exported in Spalding.

Figure 9  
Shipping news for Spalding on the 10th July 1818  
as taken from '*A History of Spalding*'

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were at various times Acts applied for by merchants and land owners that came together in order to try and improve the Welland, however the problem was never truly solved. It was primarily during the nineteenth century that a series of actions were put into affect that did help to improve trade, the port and the Welland. After a

considerable increase in trade over the previous six years, one effort was made in 1836. This increase in trade can be seen in numbers of inward and outward vessels. In 1829 there had been 250 inward bound vessels and 143 outward bound, while in 1833 there were 462 inward bound and 182 outward bound vessels and a total of 22,712 tons were imported while 13,951 tons were exported from the town [Wright, 1973]. These numbers however dropped in 1834, so in order to combat the drop in vessel numbers, actions had to be taken in order to allow vessels of a larger tonnage to approach the town, thus still increasing trade. Thus the act was obtained in 1837 and a series of works were carried out downstream from Fosdyke Bridge in order to create a controlled channel through the constantly shifting sands. Continuing efforts over the following years meant that by 1856, vessels of up to 50 or 60 tons were still able to reach the town, however by 1892 with further works, vessels of up to 120 tons could reach the town. From here cargo was then loaded onto lighters and transported in this way to Stamford, but as Wright [1973, pg7] states;

*‘...after 1863 it was only possible to get upstream as far as Market Deeping, the canalised portion in Stamford having deteriorated since the opening of the railways.’*

The railways were what could be termed as the beginning of the end for the port. When the first railways arrived in Spalding in 1848, they there after proceeded to slowly absorb most of the trade of the port, until eventually it had taken on nearly all of Spalding carrying and coastal trade in coal, corn and

other produce. The port however did not immediately shut down once the railways arrived, as the Welland still needed to be maintained and kept clear for flood prevention and this ensured that it could still be used by small to medium sized vessels and figure 10 [see below] shows the Welland in the nineteenth century. In the latter half of the nineteenth century however the shipping trade that surrounded Spalding gradually declined, despite the odd optimistic hope of revival. As stated already, this slow demise was primarily



Figure 10  
The River Welland in the nineteenth century

due to the arrival of the railways which could carry corn and coal at cheaper prices and much quicker. The second factor that contributed towards the decline was, as Wright [1973, pg8] states, advancements in shipping because;

*'As ships increased in size there were fewer vessels capable of getting up to Spalding and after 1882, when the port of Boston was improved, there was no need to stop in the Wash and transfer cargoes to the lighters on Boston Scalp.'*

So as can be seen from this statement, a further contributing factor was that of improvements at Boston port. There was however still some trade along the river. For example, the gas works continued to import coal via the river from Goole and Keadby until the early nineteenth century. Another example is that of Chamberlain and Co. who, when the tides permitted, regularly had a shipment of locust delivered to their premises until just before the First World War. The last individual to use Spalding as a port was a Mr G. F. Birch. He was using a pair of steel hulled motor barges in the first half of the twentieth century to transport goods such as hay, straw and corn [Wright 1973]. These barges were still being used occasionally until the Second World War, where they would sail between Spalding and Fosdyke where they would collect cargo from larger ships that sailed from there to Hull. It was possible for these shallow hulled barges to carry much larger cargoes than wooden hulled boats and this was important due to the often shallow nature of the Welland, however this would not have helped individuals such as the Pannells and other boat yard owners as they were not equipped to repair such vessels.

Perhaps the final contributing factor to the ultimate demise of the port was that of the motor car and subsequently other motorised vehicles. Until the car was invented there had been some lasting trade in the port in the form of ferrying

individuals up and down the river on Sundays in small motorised and rowing craft, but this was effectively killed off by the car and by 1939 the port was dead and would soon become nothing but a memory of the past. This memory however has come full circle, as today, although it may not be a busy port town, the Welland is once again an important aspect of the character of Spalding and in recent years a Water Taxi service has started to operate on the river, taking people from the centre of the town to the shopping complex on the outskirts. The trading and distribution centre that Spalding once was has passed, but there are still elements of its history to be seen in many places, in the buildings that line the banks of the Welland and in the overall character of this now quiet town.

## 6.0 Remains of the Port

Many of the buildings and structures associated with the port are now either gone or if they still remain they have been changed or modernised in order to remain appropriate to the changing demands for building space. One such feature within the town that was associated with the port, were a series of cranes along the banks of the Welland placed at strategic positions. Wright [1973, pg8] states that the first of these cranes was;

*'...said to be the one erected about 1795 by Mr Presgrave in Double Street, at the end of Herring Lane. This was the main landing point, being nearest the town centre, but the quay does not appear to have had a distinctive name.'*

The location of this crane can be seen in figure 11 and plate 6 [see below] and to this day, the foundations of the crane can be seen in situ. Before this crane was erected, goods were unloaded directly from the boats and barges into a coal yard opposite the Steam Mill public house on Double Street. This

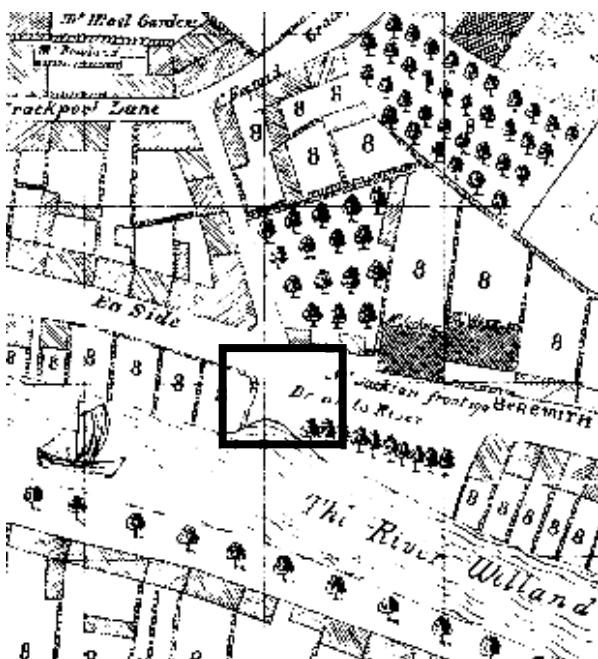


Figure 11

Grundy's 1732 map of Spalding showing the location of one of the cranes along the River Welland



Plate 6

Modern photograph of the River Welland with the site of the crane on the left hand side behind the life ring and foliage

been in use for over 300 years and in 1792 it was kept by a John and William Lamb, the two men also being wharfingers. There was a further coal yard in Double Street and Wright [1973, pg8] states that it lay;

*'...between the Ram Skin Inn and Herring Lane. This had been held by Mr Brightman but by 1856 houses had been built over the site. The Ram Skin was towards the southern end of Double Street, on the river side, and in 1973 it stands empty, awaiting the demolishers hammer.'*

Along the banks of the river there are several old warehouses and granaries that still survive, many of which have now been converted into housing or offices. One of these is that of Albion Mill and Albion House alongside it, both situated on Albion Street, due north of chain bridge. These buildings passed hands many times until in 1830 the 'Albion Granary' was acquired by William Munton and then in 1842 the 'Albion Mills' was acquired by Benjamin Mossop. Once Mossop had acquired the mills he proceeded to build a crane on the river bank outside of the establishment. This crane was capable of lifting up to five tons and was known as 'Mossop's Crane', but was later demolished in the 1880's after Benjamin Mossop died.

Perhaps the most impressive of mills within the town was that of the South Holland Mills on High Street. The original granary was erected by a William Maples who, in 1826 was trading on High Street as a timber merchant and also as a wine and spirit merchant in the market Place, however by 1846 a John Penford Harvey & Co. had erected a new steam mill on High Street to



grind corn. Until then Harvey had been using an older brewery premise on Crackpool Lane that adjoined Herring Lane. In 1882 it became known as Perkin's Mill after it transferred hands to Robert Perkins, but it then changed hands once again and in 1900 it belonged to E. W. Gooch and was being used by Chamberlain & Co. as a cattle spice mill [Wright 1973]. The building still stands to this day as can be seen from plate 7 [see below].



Plate 7

Modern photograph showing Albion House on the left hand side and Albion Mill on the right, the mill now having been converted into offices

Along with commercial buildings there were the houses of many of the people associated with the port, these primarily being the mariners. Many of the master mariners in the town lived within a close vicinity to each other, for example in 1842 fourteen of the twenty one listed master mariners were recorded in White's Directory as living on High Street and in 1856 out of the



twenty one master mariners, ten still lived there. Another building that would have been closely associated with the mariners of the town would have been the White Hart Inn and Public House. Wright [1973, pg10] states that at the White Hart there was a room called the 'Calcutta' which;

*'...was reserved exclusively for the mariners. It was originally used by those who has been to Calcutta and was later extended to all sailors until, like the port, the numbers declined and eventually ceased altogether.'*

Another clearly evident remain of the port and the associated elements is that of the gas works. Along the bank of the Welland there is a section that is clearly shored up. This is the site of the old gas works the buildings of which have since been demolished. Plates 8 and 9 [see below] show a contemporary image of the gas works and a modern image.

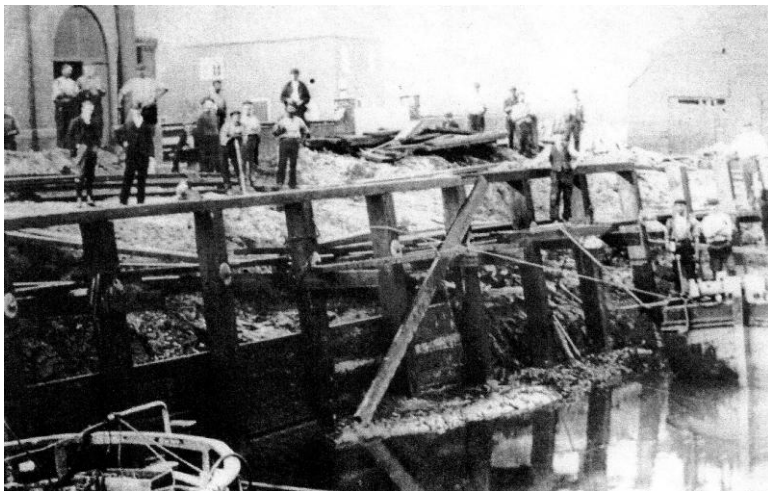


Plate 8

Contemporary image of the gas works quay showing the shoring of the bank



Plate 9

Modern image of the gas works showing the shoring of the bank and the remains of the quay

There are also numerous other converted warehouses [see plate 10 below] along the banks of the River Welland and many public houses [see plate 11 below] and inns that one can imagine would have been frequented by the mariners when they returned from a journey. Arthur Egar [1993] recalls his memories of the port in early part of the twentieth century, saying that;



Plate 10  
Converted warehouse with the bank of  
the River Welland in the foreground



Plate 11  
The Ship Albion Inn public house  
situated along the banks of the River  
Welland

*'The largest coaster to visit High Street granary was the Girton. She had to have good spring tides to get up that far. I remember her skipper used to jump ashore as soon as she berthed and make a bee-line for the Ship Albion in Albion Street.'*

Although this was near the end of the ports history, it would not be exaggerated to imagine the same actions happening through the entirety of the history of the port, with barges and vessels docking in the town to unload their cargos and the mariners venturing to the nearest or most familiar public houses to meet old friends and catch up on news.

These are the buildings and features that are left to this day that hint at the history of the town. Another feature that could be taken into account are some of the houses along the river, large and expensive, the houses of well to do merchants that would have prospered from the port and all it had to offer. It was the port in essence that has given the town much of its character that still survives to this day, a town that was centred around the river that flowed through the heart of it, the central vein and lifeblood of this small, yet highly prosperous town.

## **7.0 Further Recommendations**

Further recommendations that could be made on researching the history of Spalding's port are few, however they could be very important in order to complete an even deeper and more complete picture than the one presented in this project.

The first would be to look at the census' as this was a task that could not be completed for this project due to the enormity of the information available and the limited time scale available, however further research on the subject would provide a more detailed account and may fill in some anomalies or missing details that were found from looking at White's and Kelly's Directories.

Another area that would help to add further detail would be looking at oral histories. There are many people within the town that remember parts of the town's port, the gas works in particular are remembered by many of the older citizens and Mr Kenneth Foster comments on remembering Pannell's boat yard. This is a time consuming area of study however and would take a prolonged period of time to gather all of the necessary information, however it would be an exceptional resource to use when trying to write an even more detailed history on the port.

Finally getting access to other sources of information would prove invaluable. For example Boston port and the Spalding Shipwreck Society were both contacted on numerous occasions prior to the completion of this project however no correspondence was received, but both of these may have large

amounts of information that would provide a more detailed account, Boston port for example may have old contemporary shipping accounts that relate to goods sent to Spalding and the Spalding Shipwreck Society may hold records on mariners within the town.

These are all factors that, were this a project that was undertaken once more and with more time, would most likely provide a more detailed and concise history of Spalding's port and the impact it had on the town.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

This is a project that has covered a previously little researched subject. It has looked at not only the history of the port, but also how that history has shaped the wider history of the town, how it has changed and influenced the way Spalding is seen to this day and how it has provided it with its distinctive character.

From looking at the consulted sources it is now possible to see that the port was primarily situated around high bridge. This was due to the fact that the large sea going vessels that brought the vast majority of the commerce into the town could not pass this stone built bridge. Instead from here if goods needed to go further, they were transferred to lighters and sent that way. In discovering this it helps make sense of why to this day there are so many warehouses along this stretch of river near High Bridge but also why there are so many public houses in the near vicinity. It was a prime location for many of the businesses associated with the port and many of the mariners that would have worked on the vessels that frequented the port lived in the immediate area.

By looking at the combined information it is possible to see what caused the eventual decline and final demise of the port. It was not as has been thought simply the arrival of the railways, but instead a collective of several factors. The railways may have started this steady decline, what with absorbing much of the trade by being able to transport good faster and cheaper, but also smaller factors, such as the car finally putting an end to smaller craft ferrying

people up and down the river. The advancements in shipping technology also had their role to play in this demise, because as the vessels became larger they could no longer reach the town in the way they once had. By looking at these it is possible to see that it was a collective of all these things that finally killed the port of Spalding.

This is a project that could continually be added to with further research. Oral histories could provide yet another aspect that may add even more information.

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**Figure 2** - Cope-Faulkner, P. et al., 2010. *Spalding in context with Roman sites in the South Holland area* [Print] Wide horizons: a history of South Holland's landscape and people.

**Figure 3** - Wright, N. 1973., *Grundy's 1732 map of Spalding showing Herring Lane and its context to the River Welland*. [Print] Spalding an industrial history.

**Figure 4** - Wright, N. 1973., *John Grundy's map of Spalding 1732*. [Print] Spalding an industrial history.

**Figure 5** - Clark, B. 1978., *Clark's 1732 map of Spalding showing area of urban sprawl*. [Print] Spalding - The evolution of a fenland town.

**Figure 6** - Clark, B. 1978., *Clark's 1850 map of Spalding showing area of urban sprawl*. [Print] Spalding - The evolution of a fenland town.

**Figure 7** - Wright, N. 1973., *Spalding gas works with William Hames' ropewalk highlighted in the foreground along the riverbank*. [Print] Spalding an industrial history.

**Figure 8** - Wright, N. 1973., *Grundy's map showing fish stalls located near to High Bridge and Herring Lane that adjoins Crackpool Lane*. [Print] Spalding an industrial history.

**Figure 9** - Gooch, E.H. 1940., *Shipping news for Spalding on the 10th July 1818 as taken from 'A History of Spalding'*. [Print] A History of Spalding.

**Figure 10** - Wright, N. 1973., *The River Welland in the nineteenth century*. [Print] Spalding an industrial history.

**Figure 11** - Wright, N. 1973., *Grundy's 1732 map of Spalding showing the location of one of the cranes along the River Welland*. [Print] Spalding an industrial history.

## Plates

**Plate 1** - Wright, N. 1973., *An ocean going steamer aground in the River Welland*. [Photograph] Spalding an industrial history.

**Plate 2** - Pierce, A.J., 1978. *Pannell's boat yard on the River Welland*. [Photograph] Waterways World.

**Plate 3** - Pierce, A.J., 1978. *The disorderly interior of Pannell's workshop*. [Photograph] Waterways World.

**Plate 4** - Elsdon, M, J., 2001. *A crane outside the gas works unloading coal from a barge on the River Welland*. [Photograph] More aspects of Spalding.

**Plate 5** - Elsdon, M, J., 2001. *Boats moored outside the gas works alongside the River Welland*. [Photograph] More aspects of Spalding.

**Plate 6** - Author's own, 2011., *Modern photograph of the River Welland with the site of the crane on the left hand side behind the life ring and foliage*. [Photograph].

**Plate 7** - Author's own, 2011., *Modern photograph showing Albion House on the left hand side and Albion Mill on the right, the mill having now been converted into offices*. [Photograph].

**Plate 8** - Elsdon, M, J., 2001. *Contemporary image of the gas works quay showing the shoring of the bank*. [Photograph] More aspects of Spalding.

**Plate 9** - Author's own, 2011., *Modern image of the gas works showing the shoring of the bank and the remains of the quay*. [Photograph].

**Plate 10** - Author's own, 2011., *Converted warehouse with the bank of the River Welland in the foreground*. [Photograph].

**Plate 11** - Author's own, 2011., *The Ship Albion Inn public house situated along the banks of the River Welland*. [Photograph].

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