

SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

June 2017

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

FIRST OF ALL, it was good to see some of you at our AGM in March. I think we all enjoyed the display of historical maps of Spalding, and I was most grateful to Councillors Roger Gambba-Jones and Gary Taylor for attending and explaining what a Town Council would involve. It was regrettable that the helpful information they imparted had not been clearly put into the public realm, either by the Council or the Press. Because of this lack, far too few people had any idea of what differences it might make and were apparently unwilling to contemplate even the possibility of considering a Town Council, so unfortunately we shall remain without one for the foreseeable future.

I was delighted that John Bland came forward at the AGM to join the committee. We still have vacancies for a Press Officer, a Nature Conservation Officer and a Social Secretary. These titles may seem rather formal and off-putting, but your committee is a friendly group of people and will give every support to those who'd like to join and make a bigger contribution to the work of the Society, which is increasingly well-regarded.

The trip on the *Boston Belle* out into the Wash on Thursday, 20 July, (*see p.8*), will provide an opportunity to get to know some of us better.

A highlight for me over the last few months has been the preparation of the exhibition of photographs *Heart of a Town* celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Act of Parliament which created Conservation Areas. Many of you will have seen the display at Calthrop's, to whom we are grateful for allowing us to launch the project in such a favourable location, or you will have read about it in the Press. Thanks are due also to Councillor Elizabeth Sneath (SHDC Heritage Champion) for her warm words at the opening. The co-operation we have enjoyed with Spalding Photographic Society members, and in particular with the indefatigable Brendan D'Abreo, has been an absolute delight – and indeed an example to all. At the time of writing, the display, with additional photos, is in the Red Lion Quarter until 24 June, before moving on to other central venues in Spalding (*see p.6*). Please spread the word about the importance of our Conservation Area, so well illustrated by the display.

The installation of the second **Market Art** sculpture is taking rather longer than hoped. **The appeal, however, is still very much open** (*below*). It has already raised over £1000, and further donations will help to finance future commissions and tap into national arts funding sources.

David Jones

MUCH APPRECIATED

- **SHDC** for refurbishing the handsome wrought-iron gates to the **Sir Halley Stewart Field**.
- The architects and builders of the small infill house in **Priory Road**: although pastiche Edwardian, there's a rare attention to detail.
- **Pacey's** in Red Lion Street: nicely spruced up.
- **1 Cowbit Road**: ditto and now looking well cared for.
- **Spalding & Peterborough Transport Forum** (and helpers) for taking on the flowerbeds at the Station.
- The young mother who has been voluntarily and at her own expense planting up the two small neglected planters in **Swan Walk**.



Yes, I'd like to help the **Market Art Project** to enhance the centre of Spalding.

£5[] £10[] £25[] £50[] £100[]
Other £ _____

Please make your cheque payable to **Spalding & District Civic Society**, and send to:
**Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding,
Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN.**

Name.....

Address

Telephone.....

Email.....

THE NEW LOCAL PLAN – LATEST

THE FINAL CONSULTATION on the *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan* has not been a satisfactory exercise. Major last-minute changes had been made – amongst them the explicit scrapping of the long-standing aim to keep Spalding and Pinchbeck separate and an enlarging of Springfields. Comments at this final stage were to be restricted to technical matters but, as there had been no previous chance to comment on these last-minute changes, we commented on their substance anyway.

Pinchbeck is to be swallowed up in a great sprawl of housing north of the Vernatt's. This is in part a consequence of the absurdity of the future South Western Relief Road. The two end bits of the road are to be built during the next 20 years, but no middle – as if two spanking highways had been built up to the banks of the Humber, but no bridge. The ultimate culprit for the absurdity is of course the government, with its ideological insistence on infrastructure being paid for by the developer. Thus, Broadgate's Holland Park development (already under way) will fund the southern bit of the road, and developers of the housing sprawl north of the Vernatt's the northern bit. The middle bit may or may not be built at some indeterminate time after 2036, depending on whether developers will come forward to pay for it via further huge housing developments. Meanwhile, the traffic generated by all the housing at the two ends will increase congestion in the town centre. Some relief!

Huge increases of housing will of course demand more shops and stores. And it's here that the Plan drops its massive last-minute bombshell. That demand, it says, is to be met by expanding Springfields. Town centre retailers are understandably dismayed. As long ago as 2000, Councillor Gambba-Jones, then Chairman of Spalding Town Forum, recognised that increasing out-of-town retail capacity is one sure way "to kill a town centre" (*Spalding Guardian*, 19 October 2000). And the Plan itself admits enlarging Springfields "may have an adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of Spalding town centre". Nevertheless, it then opts to direct the new shops and stores to Springfields, with the town centre not getting a look-in until after 2026. The reason? The town centre is already full, the Plan says, and has no further retail space to offer.

Really? Setting aside the currently empty shops (now including the large Brantano's) and the new ones that are part of the Paul Taylor's redevelopment on Winsover Road, what about the central brownfield sites of the former Sorting Office and the long-derelict area behind the Crescent, not to mention the space wasted in ground-level carparks that could be released by multi-storey parking? The Plan here is completely back-to-front. The town centre should be first for new retail development; Springfields second. With its 2.3 million visitors a year, Springfields wouldn't suffer. Whereas if the town centre has to wait until an enlarged Springfields has killed off most of the centre's independents, 2026 will be too late.

"The Plan here is completely back-to-front."

Now for two major omissions and an astonishing admission. A plan is "a scheme for accomplishing a purpose" (*Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary*). Yet there is not the slightest attempt to produce a scheme to get rid of, or even reduce, Spalding's dire shortfall of green recreational space. Nor to identify the town's brownfield sites and the uses preferred for them. When we had earlier challenged the two omissions, we were told that "no sites had come forward". This is not planning. No preparation of a scheme to meet the community's needs, just sitting back and hoping. In other words, capitulating to the piecemeal whims or financial needs of landowners. We have repeatedly suggested possible new green recreation areas and identified brownfield sites. In vain: they remain blanks on the map.

There *are* good things in the Plan. The emphasis on the importance of good design, for example; the need to protect quintessential features of the wider fenland landscape; the debasing effect on the street scene of solid lines of parked cars

But overall the Plan is a huge disappointment, doing little to counteract the generalities of the *National Planning Policy Framework*. In this respect it compares poorly with the more specific provisions of the existing *South Holland Local Plan*. With much to be left to the subjective judgement of individual case-officers, there are likely to be far more time-consuming appeals when planning applications have been refused.

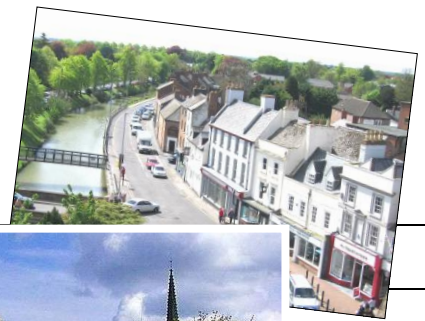
We now await the Inspector's examination in public, and finally his verdict.

Heart of a Town

2018 Calendar

M	T	W	
	1	2	
7	8	9	
14	15	16	17
21	22	23	24
28	29	30	31

The picture on the cover may vary slightly from that shown.



Spalding
2018

Heart of a Town

Calendar
2018

Members' discount price

£5

includes card envelope

Thirteen striking photographs from the much-praised Conservation Area exhibition. Well-loved views and unexpected details. The A4 colour calendar will be available from Bookmark and Ayscoughfee Museum, but only direct from the Society at the **members' special discount price of £5.00**. Free delivery locally. Otherwise add £2.50 per calendar for postage and packing. Would make ideal Christmas present.

Please send cheques to: Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, PE11 2E.

Please send me calendars at £5.00/£7.50 each. I enclose a cheque for £, made out to Spalding and District Civic Society.

Name Address

Tel. Email

BLUE PLAQUES

WE ARE TURNING OVER ideas for a further blue plaque. Amongst those being considered are :-

John Grundy senior (1696-1748), land surveyor and mathematics teacher, without whose map of 1732 for the Gentlemen's Society we should know little of how the town was in the early 18th century.

John Grundy junior, his son (1719-1783), canal builder and flood defence engineer, whose work included the original construction of Hull docks, the Driffield Navigation, the Market Weighton Canal, and local drainage works.

Hilkiah Burgess (1775-1868), engraver and artist, whose prints and many watercolours are an invaluable record of 19th century Spalding, some of whose buildings we can see surviving almost unchanged, whilst humbler ones have vanished from our streets for ever.

Charlotte Charinton (1801-88), local benefactress, who, having inherited the whole of her father's estate, financed the building of St.Paul's Church and its vicarage and schoolroom, as well as helping with the restoration of many other churches in the district.

A recently suggested name from a member is that of "Spalding's forgotten knight", **Sir Robert Woolley Walden** (1854-1929), the son of local bakers, who rose to become Mayor of the City of Westminster and was knighted for his long record of public service, particularly in Poor Law administration.

George Shepherd (1881-1954), 1st Baron Shepherd of Spalding, Labour politician, important negotiator setting up the wartime coalition between Churchill's Conservatives and Atlee's Labour Party and later party whip in both Commons and the House of Lords.



John Honnor

1980. IT IS NOT a particularly striking photograph, but a very telling one nevertheless. Look at the two figures. The young mother, her view cut off by the lorry, has taken the chance of a slight gap in the nose-to-tail trucks, vans and cars, only to find herself having to rush for safety with her child from an advancing car just feet away. The older

woman looks tensely to see if she can make it. Anxiety, tension, stress: the Spalding shopping experience before pedestrianisation. This came to the Market Place in 1985, with Hall Place following after the opening of the bypass in 1994.

The Inspector's 10am-4pm compromise enabled all sorts of changes to happen: trees in front of the South Holland Centre, café tables outside the Red Lion and in Bridge Street, the decluttering of Hall Place to make way for the seating feature, buskers, a bigger stall market..... And gradually people's mindset began to change too. No longer on edge for danger, but more leisurely, relaxed, friendly.

One of our members recalls how dangerous it was to take his small children into town, gripping their hands tightly lest they step into the traffic, window shopping an impossibility. And then the wonderful contrast later of being able to allow his small grandchildren the joy of running freely from shop to shop.

Scene: Hall Place. Two young mothers sit chatting, toddlers released from their buggies. One has just learnt that a ball can be moved by a foot as well as a hand. A few wobbly attempts and then he connects beautifully, and the ball rolls across towards two elderly men. One gets up, smiles and gently taps the ball back again. The future Wayne Rooney laughs and jumps up and down.

This is what public space is about: a pleasant, relaxed place in which to be for a time, and the sharing and strengthening of our common humanity.

Our pedestrianised town centre has a lot going for it, in its riverside, its layout and its many handsome buildings – as the photographs in our *Heart of a Town* exhibition (p.6) graphically show – but it is not quite doing itself justice. A bit scruffy for a lot of the time, many feel, and in need of a bit of tender loving care.

Let's start in Hall Place, and start small :-

- Replace the missing seat slats we first notified LCC about two years ago;
- Restore the planters to their natural hardwood weathered silver;
- Increase their floral impact by thinking vertically as well as horizontally (*right*);
- Restore the seating circle to the central community role on market days it was always



intended to have. At the moment market stalls back up against it, taking over the seating for dumping boxes (*left*) and appropriating parts under their canvas, not to mention the parked vans. (*See across.*) In short, rethink the stall layout;

- Invite the buskers into the circle – or even offer them a regular slot? There've been brilliant saxophone and clarinet players during the last two years and a cracking South

American or Cajun jazz trio stirring one's dancing feet and bringing a smile to the face. And what about members of the Folk Club? Or martial arts demonstrations..... The more people are drawn in the more our stalls and shops benefit.

Zooming outwards now :-

- Relocate bus-stops to the Prior's Oven lay-by (there's already seating), the end of Bridge Street and Turner's Fish Restaurant;
- Introduce an awards scheme, like the Building Awards Scheme, for shop fronts and window-dressing;
- Entice visitors to discover the independents of Francis Street and the Crescent by making the Hole-in-the-Wall a floral passage-way

Further suggestions will have to wait for the next Newsletter.

The basic need is someone at portfolio or officer level to be responsible for *the centre as a whole* and to oversee a regeneration programme. The Society believes that, in these difficult times, it is only by making the centre as attractive as possible – handsome, clean, lively, safe and welcoming – that people will come in, will shop here rather than elsewhere, will visit and return, and so offer the security that businesses need to set up and remain. Only as a vibrant market town can we hope to tap into Springfield's 2.3 million annual visitors. We have been offering our suggestions to the Council for some years now. More recently we have begun to turn, like Spalding in Bloom, to trying to make a practical, physical, difference as well. First the Blue Plaques and now, in partnership with arts organisation Transported, the ambitious Market Art Project. As the *National Planning Policy Framework* puts it: "Town centres [are] the heart of their communities."



PLANNING MATTERS

THERE have not been many planning applications of significance since the last Newsletter. It was encouraging that the applicant for an eco-house on Magellan Way had consulted both an ecologist and local residents, resulting in better drawings and photos than with many applications we see. Our only reservation concerns the safety of a house built on a former spoil heap.

The re-submission for houses on Law's Yard compares poorly with the previously approved proposal. There is little landscaping, and cramming in more houses demands more parking spaces. The 3-D drawings, however, show no cars at all, although it is hard to imagine the future street scene not being totally dominated by them. New interpretations of flood risk result in ground floor levels having to be a good metre above the surrounding land, with a consequent flight of steps up to each front door. At a time when *public* buildings are rightly required to accommodate the needs of disabled people, different standards would seem to apply in the *private* sphere. And where has this increased flood risk come from? In our Coronation Channel we have a magnificent

piece of engineering, which has protected our town admirably for over 60 years and which will continue to do so if properly maintained. Let's hope the intention is not to raise flood risk by reducing maintenance.

Another re-submission worse than the previously approved proposal is in Victoria Street – for apartments got up to look like a Georgian town house but showing little understanding of the essentials. One wonders why they persist, as it is one of the most difficult of styles to bring off successfully.

A couple of things that are looking up: now that building is in full swing on the Paul Taylor site and at Aldi, we can look forward to a more attractive southern side of Winsover Road. Secondly, the Council seems to be making slightly more positive noises about the Bull and Monkie site, but we should like to have more than just the noises, and indeed we are keen to see action on the other brownfield sites in Spalding, about which we hear nothing, and which the new Local Plan draft appears to ignore.

Planning Sub-Committee

HEART OF A TOWN

celebrating 50 years of conservation areas

“Where’s that?” “I didn’t know that’s how Hole-in-the-Wall got its name.”

The exhibition of photographs of the Spalding Conservation Area was opened at Calthrop’s in the Market Place on 31 May by County and District Councillor Elizabeth Sneath, and moved on to the Red Lion Quarter on Tuesday, 13 June, for a fortnight.

“EXPLORING the possibility of a joint project” was how the last Newsletter put it; and in the three months since then the collaboration with Spalding Photographic Society has grown into a full-blown exhibition – with an exciting spin-off. (See p.3.)

“After we’d re-jigged our web-site,” said Brendan D’Abreo of the Photographic Society, “we got a number of requests for help, but it was the Civic Society’s plan to celebrate the 1967 Civic Amenities Act (which created the idea of conservation areas) that we immediately found the most attractive.”

And it shows! There are 50 marvellous pictures of the Spalding Conservation Area – some you’d expect to find, others showing the familiar from an unfamiliar angle, details you’ve never noticed perhaps, some colour, some black-and-white, some stunningly dramatic through infra-red photography. They do our Conservation Area proud. Gratifyingly, there have been requests to purchase copies.

“We hope these lovely images will open eyes and sharpen perception of the attractions of our town centre,” said David Jones at the opening, “and encourage all of us to take a bit more care of it.”

Opening the exhibition, Councillor Sneath, who is also South Holland’s Heritage Champion, said:



Exhibition at the Red Lion Quarter.

Brendan D’Abreo



Kevin Pallister (Calthrop’s), Brendan D’Abreo (Photographic Society), Councillor Sneath and David Jones (Chairman).

“Spalding is fortunate to have such a body as the Civic Society – vibrant, vocal and lively – to keep an eye on our built environment. Their observations are always well informed (although sometimes uncomfortable for us as councillors!).” And she invited the exhibition to extend its tour for an extra fortnight to the Council Offices in Priory Road.

The exhibition will run throughout the summer, moving on from venue to venue for a fortnight each as follows :- **Red Lion Quarter** (Tuesday, 13 June), **Hill’s Department Store** (Tuesday, 27 June), **Bookmark** (11 July), **Library** (Tuesday, 25 July), **Church of St.Mary and St.Nicolas** (Tuesday, 8 August), **Ayscoughfee Museum** (Wednesday, 23 August), **Broad Street Methodist Church** (Tuesday, 5 September), **Council Offices, Priory Road** (Tuesday, 19 September).

We hope all members will take the opportunity to go along to the exhibition at some point and urge family and friends to do likewise – and to take their visitors with them. The selection of pictures will vary from time to time, and include each month’s winner from the photographic competition *The Voice* is generously holding in support of the exhibition.

Many thanks to the members of the Photographic Society for the artistry of their camera-work, to their chairman Roger Human for his warm support for the project and to Brendan D’Abreo for his hours of organising, photographing, printing and mounting.

In which of Jane Austen’s novels does one of the young men go to visit a friend living in Peterborough?
(Answer on p.8.)



LUTYENS'S BEST?

BRITAIN'S MOST FAMOUS ARCHITECT a hundred years ago was Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944). He designed Castle Drago in Devon and many country houses in the heyday of Edwardian country house building. After the First World War he designed our best-known war memorials, such as the Cenotaph in Whitehall and the massive memorial in Thiepval, Northern France, to those who died in the Battle of the Somme. He also designed more modest memorials, such as ours in Ayscoughfee Gardens.

About fifty of his designs are reviewed in the superbly produced and researched monograph by Tim Skelton and Gerald Gliddon, *Sir Edwin Lutyens and the Great War Cemeteries and Memorials* (pub. Frances Lincoln). But there's only one given a whole chapter to itself: Spalding. When one sees the vast range of these memorials, our memorial, in the style of a doric temple with a low-pitched pantiled roof, stands out as an elegant, under-stated gem.

The inspiration for it came from the family of the Spalding M.P. Francis McLaren, who died in 1917 while flying with the Royal Flying Corps in France. Although his home was elsewhere, his widow was keen that he should be commemorated in Spalding along with all others from Spalding who had died in the war. It was Mrs. McLaren, a niece of Lutyens's garden-designing partner Gertrude Jekyll, who commissioned Lutyens to design the memorial. The original designs were quite extensive, with an almost Mediterranean atmosphere, and met some local resistance, even though the McLarens would be contributing a significant sum themselves. However, with an adapted, cheaper design from Lutyens – creatively distilling the building to the best core part we see today – the building garnered the necessary public and financial backing and was built in 1921/22. We are very lucky that our war dead are commemorated so beautifully. The memorial's outstanding architecture was recently recognised nationally when it was upgraded to a Grade I listing (joining the Cenotaph and six others by Lutyens). So shouldn't we in Spalding do more to make our memorial more appreciated? For a start, we could have a sign at the entrance to Ayscoughfee Gardens to show where it is.

Anthony Keeling

SOCIETY NOTES

THIS YEAR'S AGM, held at the Grammar School's Business Centre on 21 March, presented the record of a very busy twelve months. Perhaps our most important undertaking had been our extensive comments on the emerging new Local Plan (*see p.2*), which will guide development in South East Lincolnshire for the next 20 years. More immediately, two planning applications had thrown up key issues: the Council's threat to its own playing fields and large national companies' philistine disregard for the built environment of their host towns. We failed in our efforts to stop half of the Severn Road Playing Field being lost to housing, but succeeded in our opposition to Sainsbury's plan to dump a garishly got-up portacabin (a so-called 'pod') on its forecourt. Particularly positive developments had been the apartment block and terrace on the old Tax Office

site and work starting on the Paul Taylor site on Winsover Road.

The Society's positive contributions to the local scene have increasingly been evident in the collaboration with the Photographic Society to mount the *Heart of a Town* exhibition (*p.6*) and our Blue Plaques Scheme (*p.3*) and ambitious Market Art Project.

It was disappointing that not more members were present to discuss the important possibility of a Town Council for Spalding, but not perhaps surprising, given the absence of any wider debate within the community. (*See Chairman's comments, p.1.*)

Officers for the coming year:- David Jones (Chairman), Robert West (Vice-Chairman), Marion Brassington (Secretary), Melvyn Price (Treasurer), and Committee members John Charlesworth, John Honnor, Paul Walls and John Bland. [Page 8 ►



The third in our series of some of the things that make Spalding a pleasant place to live and work in and to visit. Chosen this time by **Staff at the Spalding Guardian.**

SPALDING

Visible from many viewpoints, the Church of St. Mary & St. Nicolas is particularly pleasing seen framed by trees from this angle in Church Str.



What's going on here is a bit of a puzzle. It is one of many fascinating details at the rear of Ayscoughfee Hall which show that it is of late mediaeval origins behind the Victorian front.

Photographs by Tim Wilson



'The Limes', Double Street, one of the handsome historic houses along this stretch of the river.

Members are invited to send in photographs of parts or details of Spalding they particularly enjoy (print, memory stick or DVD) to the Editor – contact details below – with a few words about their choice.

◀Page 7] Meanwhile, Sue Wellock is reviewing the Society's web-site.

Subscriptions: a gentle reminder from the Treasurer to members who pay by cheque but may not yet have renewed their subscription. (*Form across.*)

There has been a ready take-up of places on the **Boston Belle trip** out into the Wash on 20 July. A reminder that the departure time is 1.30pm from Sluice Bridge, Boston Marina, on Witham Bank East (PE21 9JU). Please arrive at least 30 minutes before departure time, which is governed by the tide. The boat cannot therefore wait for latecomers. There is a long-stay carpark just 5 minutes walk away in Tunnard Street (PE21 6PL). But please allow plenty of time to get to the departure point, as members will not need reminding of the heavy traffic on the Boston approach roads!

The young man is Edmund Bertram – in *Mansfield Park*.

Spalding and District Civic Society

I enclose a cheque for
£8 for individual membership / **£12** for 2 persons
 In the same household / Free in full-time education /
 Details of a standing order mandate.

Name.....

Address.....

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Please send to: **Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens,
 Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN.**

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