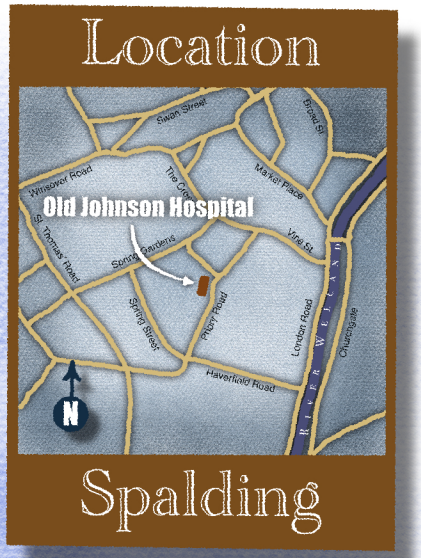
The Old Johnson Hospital

The original Johnson Hospital building on Priory Road, Spalding looks forlorn today, having stood unoccupied since 2009. But at one time is was a jewel in the town's crown.

The hospital was opened in 1881, at a cost of £9000. It has a Gothic style (the original Gothic style was medieval but was revived in Victorian times). Steep pitched roofs and pointed window and door arches are typical Gothic.





Architecture

The Old Johnson Hospital

Ref: 002 South Holland Miscellany series, v1

Calendar Of Events

The provisions of the wills of elderly spinster sisters Elizabeth Ann and Mary Ann Johnson state that a portion of their estate is to be used to build a hospital in Spalding. Elizabeth died in 1872 and Mary Ann in 1878. A group of Trustees is formed to oversee the planning and building of the hospital, as well as oversee its operations.

July 1879
Building work commences

12 October 1881
The hospital is officially opened. A packed dedication service is held in St Peters church, which stood opposite the hospital.

14 October 1881
Just two days after formally opening, a violent thunderstorm caused the 19 foot chimney at the south end of the hospital to collapse.

1893
Arrangements are made to provide board and lodging for a Jubilee Nurse (basically a district nurse who would treat the poor).

1895
Another thunderstorm causes damage, at a repair cost of £262 6s 1d.

1913
A children's ward and a new Operating Theatre is opened. Insured persons under the new National Insurance Act 1911 were eligible to be admitted.

1914-18
During the First World War, the War Office utilised the hospital for the treatment of wounded soldiers.

1920
Electric lighting is installed

1948
The NHS is born, and Johnson Hospital comes under state ownership.

1958
Part of the hospital is converted into a maternity unit. Due to a shortage of staff it does not become operational until September 1959.

1964
The Avalon wards were built on the site of the old Spalding tax office (across the road from the hospital) for the benefit of geriatric patients.

Late 1960s
The Children's Ward closes.

1981
A Centenary Appeal funds a new physiotherapy department and the old one is redeveloped into an extended out-patients department.

2009
The new Johnson Community Hospital opens on a new site on Pinchbeck Road, Spalding. The old building becomes vacant.

2011
Planning consent granted for demolition and 12 new flats, but this expired in 2014.

2019
The building still stands, boarded up, idle and an ever increasing eyesore.

Stu

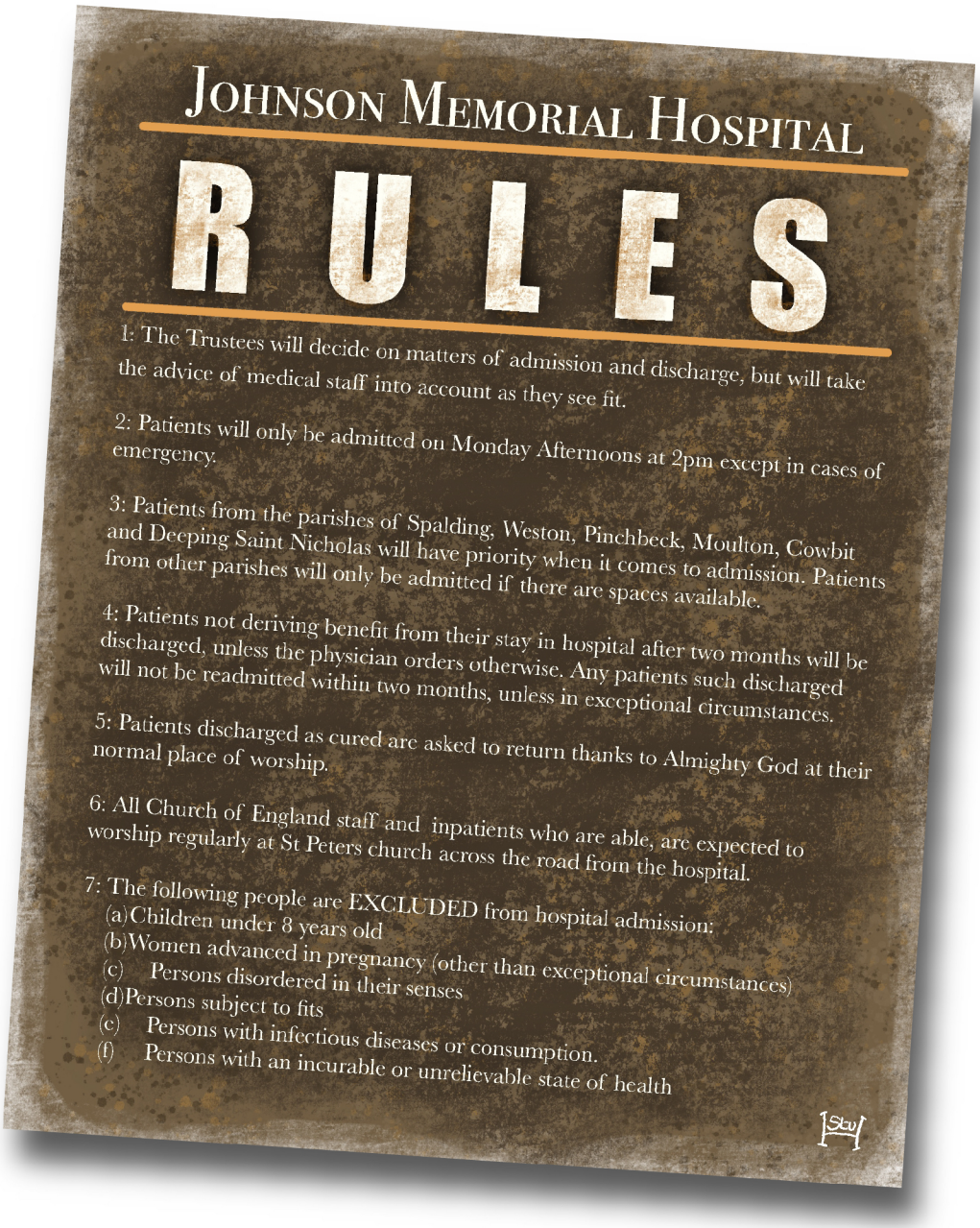
The Early Years

The old Johnson Memorial Hospital owed its existence to two elderly spinster sisters of the Johnson family - a well respected and established family of great standing in Spalding. On her death in 1872, Elizabeth Ann Johnson bequeathed the bulk of her estate to her sister Mary Ann, stipulating that on Mary Ann's death the residue of the estate should be used to build a hospital for the people of Spalding and the surrounding Parishes. Mary Ann purchased the site upon which the hospital was to be built, and past it on to a Board of Trustees appointed to oversee the building and running of the hospital. Trustees comprised a group of local gentry; the vicars of the surrounding parishes and some members of well known Spalding families.

On Mary Ann's death in 1878, the Trustees oversaw the planning, commissioning and building of the hospital, which was formally opened on 12 October 1881.

The Trustees were the key decision makers on all matters pertaining to the subsequent running of the hospital, and they invoked strict rules and regulations as to how the hospital should be run, including who could and could not be admitted. They hired and fired staff, and on their regular Monday afternoon meetings they would receive reports from the medical staff, make admission and discharge decisions and discuss and agree any matters pertaining to the hospital accounts.

The rules and regulations pertaining to admission and discharge may seem draconian by today's standards (and that such decisions were being made by non-medical people, such were the Trustees), but we must take into account the standards of the times. That the hospital existed at all was a bonus for the ordinary folk of the area. This was in a time before the National Health Service existed (which wasn't until 1948), and the choices facing unwell people were stark. Those that could afford it would pay a doctor for treatment in their own home. The very poor could receive basic treatment within a workhouse infirmary. Charitable hospitals such as the Johnson Memorial would provide in-patient treatment for certain conditions, either free of charge or for a modest fee. Lunatic Asylums catered (I use the term loosely) for the mentally ill, whilst some 'isolation' hospitals existed for the treatment of various infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, smallpox and scarlet fever.



The Latter Years

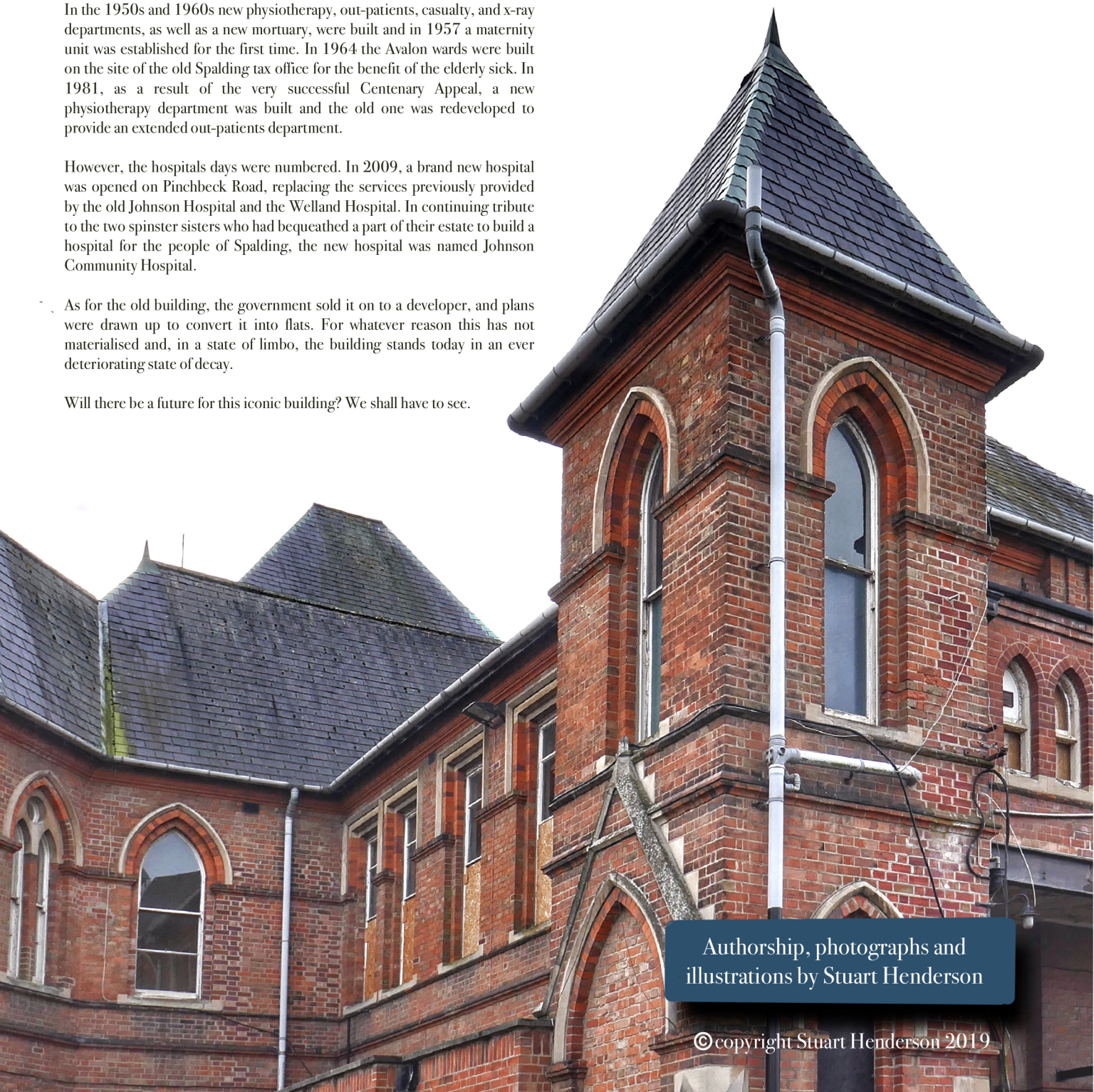
The year 1948 was a landmark one for Johnson Hospital, for in that year it came under state control at the launch of the National Health Service. Joining thousands of other medical institutions, Johnson Hospital was to play its part in the new concept of free medical treatment for all, at the point of need.

In the 1950s and 1960s new physiotherapy, out-patients, casualty, and x-ray departments, as well as a new mortuary, were built and in 1957 a maternity unit was established for the first time. In 1964 the Avalon wards were built on the site of the old Spalding tax office for the benefit of the elderly sick. In 1981, as a result of the very successful Centenary Appeal, a new physiotherapy department was built and the old one was redeveloped to provide an extended out-patients department.

However, the hospitals days were numbered. In 2009, a brand new hospital was opened on Pinchbeck Road, replacing the services previously provided by the old Johnson Hospital and the Welland Hospital. In continuing tribute to the two spinster sisters who had bequeathed a part of their estate to build a hospital for the people of Spalding, the new hospital was named Johnson Community Hospital.

As for the old building, the government sold it on to a developer, and plans were drawn up to convert it into flats. For whatever reason this has not materialised and, in a state of limbo, the building stands today in an ever deteriorating state of decay.

Will there be a future for this iconic building? We shall have to see.



Authorship, photographs and illustrations by Stuart Henderson

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