

SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2019

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

AS MY TIME as your Chairman draws to a close, I reflect on what we have done in those (too many) years. Being the person that I am, I recall to mind the things that still need to happen in order to make Spalding a great place in which to live and work, and which people will want to visit. I think of the descriptive plaques that we wanted to put on town centre buildings to inform locals and visitors of the history of the town. I think of eyesores like the former Sorting Office, Johnson Hospital and Bull and Monkie site, where some more effective campaigning is needed. I have been hoping to influence more young people to get involved, but have clearly failed. I have the dream that solving these issues would enhance civic pride.

Because of other causes that I am concerned with, like the church choir and the junior squash club and Pedals, I have not found the time and energy to go on the barricades. Being Chairman often means picking up the pieces when everybody else is too busy, so at the moment I am supporting the wonderful Judy Chapman in her efforts to get the next Blue Plaque installed on 3 New Road, I have had to take on the role of Planning Officer and am now representing the Society on the Town Forum. I shall doubtless still be campaigning for more of the Market Art Project and shall be attending meetings with

Council officers on our other issues, like the protection of public green spaces, getting the Johnson Memorial Drinking Fountain back into the middle of Spalding, working on the town centre regeneration project that is gradually getting under way, and preparing to produce a picture calendar for 2020 to celebrate 50 years of Spalding's Conservation Area.

Of course we are grateful for the quiet support that members give us by their annual subscriptions and attendance at the AGM. Our causes would be furthered by members coming forward to help campaign on individual issues – there must be something in our list that you can particularly relate to, and if you pick up the gauntlet, this does not commit you to attending committee meetings (in case that was putting you off). Individual members are already doing their bit, and here I express gratitude to Judy Chapman for her work on the blue plaques, Sue Wellock for her work on the website, and John Honnor for kindly distributing paper copies of the Newsletter. As we approach the District Council elections, we can all be thinking of questions with which to challenge the candidates, so that the best outcomes can be achieved for Spalding. You all have masses of good will – may I encourage you to express this more actively? **David Jones**

For the diary

Unveiling of
LAURY DIZENGREMEL'S
Sculpture – 'The Hiring'

Bank Holiday Monday, 6 May 11.00 am Hall Place

PLANNING MATTERS

THERE HAVE BEEN few planning applications of interest recently. We no longer comment on the routine applications for house extensions, but we have commented on the dull and undistinguished designs of proposed new housing in Law's Yard and next to the former Robin Hood pub. A major development which has attracted multiple objections, including ours, relates to the proposal for housing on the north-east quadrant of the B1173//A16/A1175 junction; housing was not in the original application, and the developers have been cavalier in their approach to an important bridleway.

We have also objected to an application for a 'mixed use' development on the Wardentree Industrial Estate, including a drive-through take-away and restaurant, a Gregg's shop, a gym, and so on. In neither the existing Local Plan nor the one about to be adopted is Wardentree Industrial Estate designated for mixed use. Out-of-town retail development such as this is of course an obvious threat to the retail health of town centres, and is

therefore directly contrary to Policy 25 of the *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan*, 'Ensuring Viable Town Centres'. (See also below and p.6.)

In the near future we shall be deliberating on the proposed housing development to the north of the Johnson Hospital, on which LCC Heritage Officer Ian Marshman, who will be speaking to us at our AGM in March, has flagged up the need for an archaeological report. We will draw his attention to the Roman artefacts found near Spalding some years ago and which were brought to an event of ours.

Signage has attracted our attention, both on the restaurant fascia at 25 Station Street – where the new lettering was in place ahead of approval by the Council – and on the new Robert Goddard shop, where Revill's used to be, and where we had hoped for more traditional and dignified lettering. Looking around the Conservation Area, one sometimes wonders how or indeed whether the signage was ever approved. There is maybe someone who would like to adopt this as a personal cause

Planning Sub-Committee.

THE SOCIETY AND THE NEW LOCAL PLAN

IT WAS NOT UNTIL JANUARY that the Inspectors finally delivered their verdict on the new *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan*: "We recommend non-adoption of it as submitted." However, they went on to set out the various alterations, additions and rewritings required to make it acceptable. With these incorporated, it is expected that it will be now to be adopted in March.

The Society has responded to all three consultations and contributed to the Inspector's oral examination of the various aspects of the Plan that most concerned us. What difference did it make?

1. Our efforts to get the **blacking out of shop windows** under control are reported on p.6. Although only partially successful, it has set an important precedent. For the first time the need to control this new and harmful practice has been officially recognised, by officers and by the planning inspectorate. It has also highlighted the inadequacy of the current advertising regulations.

Our campaigning, therefore, now moves to seeking to get these regulations rewritten and brought up-to-date.

2. The policy for the **regeneration of town centres** has been strengthened. 'Supporting the Vitality and Viability of Boston and Spalding Town Centres' (Policy 25) was an entirely new one inserted by the Inspector, but as subsequently drafted by the officers was, we felt, too wishy-washy to be effective. "The Councils will consider opportunities" to support the town centres. [*Consider* does not commit anyone to actually taking any *action!*]. Again, "Considering opportunities to support" [as before]. These we got altered to: "The Councils will *promote* appropriate opportunities" to support town centres; and "*Encouraging* opportunities to support" Thus, the two councils now have to *act*, positively, to regenerate their town centres.

3. We secured the **visual protection of the fenland landscape**. The old Plan has some generalised references to protecting the [Page 8 ►

THE BIG AND THE BRONZE AND THE SMALL

THE PICTURES say it all, really. When we chose Joseph Hillier for the first commission in the Society's ambitious Market Art Project, we knew that he had worked on a huge scale, but that he was also finding that the state-of-the-art technology of 3-D imaging enabled him to work on the sort of small scale that can be seen in the 14 miniature bronzes he subsequently created for the town centre.

The enormous bronze he is currently in the middle of creating – shown above at the Castle Fine Arts Foundry in Wales – is destined for the forecourt of the Theatre Royal in Plymouth, with audiences passing beneath it to the entrance – a bit like Gulliver astride the marching Lilliputian army. It will be 23ft (7m) high when finished and 30ft (9m) wide, and be the country's largest bronze statue.

"Had I not developed the new approach [I did] with the sculptures for Spalding," he told the *Spalding Guardian*, "I would never have come up with this new piece for Plymouth."

He went on: "Working in Lincolnshire was such a valuable experience for which I shall always be grateful – and especially the open-hearted way so many people helped me in researching the sculptures from so many of the area's amazing organisations, including Transported, the Civic Society, Ayscoughfee Hall Museum, the old forge, the Gentlemen's Society, the Spalding Auction and all the local farmers and workers from Spalding and all over Europe who took part in and became subjects for the 14 sculptures now part of the fabric of Spalding" (13 December 2018).

Whilst Joseph's Spalding figures celebrate the pre-eminence of the area's present food production and processing, further commissions for our Market Art Project will look back to the days when the livestock market filled the town centre itself with sheep, cattle, pigs and poultry, beginning with Laury Dizengremel's *The Hiring* commemorating the historic annual hiring fair, which is finally to be unveiled in Hall Place on Bank Holiday Monday, 6 May, 11.00 am. Make a date in your diary.



MUCH APPRECIATED

- **Baytree Nurseries** for supplying Christmas trees for Hall Place for many years; and, now that they have withdrawn, appreciation for **Coun. Jack McLean** for diligently seeking out a new donor. The tree was a bit smaller than usual, but beautifully shaped. What a pity therefore to hide so much of it. What may look like



snow to enemy soldiers a mile away in a winter campaign looks merely tatty close-up. Why not let us see the whole tree and its lights through the railings next time?

- **Hill's Department Store** for another outstanding Christmas window display.
- **J.Hodgson and Sons Ltd.** for starting repair work on the damaged White Hart portico. It would be nice if the name could be got back onto this listed building at the same time.
- **The Library** for its succession of jig-saw puzzles. A really imaginative communal endeavour, though the collaborators rarely see each other, just the results at the next visit.
- **East Midland Trains** for the planned lifts and long-needed upgrading of the Station.
- **SHDC** for finding an extra allocation of money for street cleaning, and tackling litter and fly-tipping.

SOCIETY NOTES

THERE WERE OVER 40 at the entertaining Slide Quiz on Tuesday, 5 February, pitting their knowledge of Spalding against the images on-screen. Probably the easiest round was 'Not Open All Hours', which showed shop doorways in the town centre taken at 9 o'clock on a Sunday morning:- Inkley's, Beale's, Bookmark, Elderkin's, B&Q, etc. Trickier were the



Chairman David Jones presents prizes to winning team Judy and Mike Chapman (and himself!). Photo: John Bland

bridges over the river, where the footbridges all look pretty much the same when viewed end-on, with only tantalising glimpses of buildings beyond to provide a clue. And how many of us have noticed the ornate wall-sundial outside the Gentlemen's Society or the elaborate Victorian gas-lantern in front of the old Johnson Hospital?

Well-earned congratulations, therefore, on a score of almost full marks to the winning team of David Jones and Judy and Mike Chapman; and warmest thanks to Marian Boxall and Kath Price, who organised the refreshments; and above all to photographer and quiz-master Pat Wensor for a most enjoyable evening.

CONGRATULATIONS to member John Hayes on his recent knighthood. It was good also to read that he had led a debate in the House of Commons on the need for beauty in our new housing and not merely cheapness. They are not incompatible. The housing minister, Kit Malthouse, made the interesting point: "Build beautifully and communities will actually welcome developers, rather than drive them out of town at the tip of a pitchfork."

A WARM WELCOME to new member Alistair Crisp.

THE TREASURER would like to remind existing members who pay by cheque that it is time to renew your subscriptions by filling in the

form below or printing it out and sending it to him with your subscription. PLEASE NOTE his new address: **Melvyn Price, 3 Morus Close, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2QL.** If you have copies of the Society's brochure (maroon) for recruiting new members, it would be helpful if you could insert Melvyn's new address.

THE MOVE of the *Free Press* and *Spalding Guardian* offices to their new smaller premises in Francis Street has meant that the archive issues of the two papers have had to be deposited at the head offices of their publisher, Iliffe Media Publishing Ltd., in Cambridge. They are, however, available on micro-film in the Library in Victoria Street.

SPALDING AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

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

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code..... Telephone..... E-mail.....

Please send to: Melvyn Price, 3 Morus Close, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2QL.

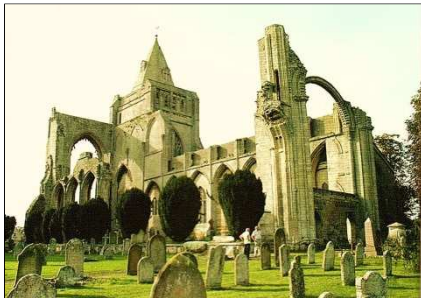
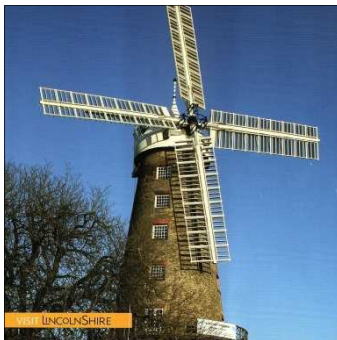
AGM

For the diary

Protecting South Holland's Heritage

illustrated talk

by

IAN MARSHMAN
LCC Historic Environment Officer


The Holyrood House Scandal

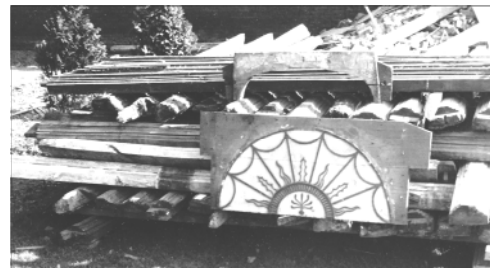
a piece of

South Holland's heritage

 that was wilfully **not** protected

A display of documents, photographs and artefacts kindly lent by the Gentlemen's Society.

Holyrood House – like Ayscoughfee Hall next door – was a late mediaeval mansion. Its front and interior were given a handsome makeover in Georgian times, and it was the home of Johnson family members for many years. It was bought by Spalding Urban District Council in 1944 with the intention of knocking it down to build a town-hall for themselves. Frustrated by the widespread outcry and the government preservation order placed on it, the Council deliberately let it fall into increasing disrepair, until demolition became inevitable. It was demolished in 1959. Not one of the SUDC's more glorious episodes. [See below.] The town-hall that replaced it is now the Social Services Offices.



It was this disgraceful disregard for our heritage that sparked the founding of the Civic Society in 1960. "Never again," was the determination.

SIR JOHN AND SIR HUMPHREY

IT WAS IN 1954 that the Urban District Council *formally* resolved to demolish Holyrood House. The widespread outcry that followed included the voice of John Betjeman: "Holyrood House, Spalding, [is] a charming late-Georgian building," he wrote, "in a town fast destroying its beauty. The town of Spalding is the demolisher" (*The Spectator*, December 1954).

In June 1956, following a deputation from the Gentlemen's Society, the Ministry of Housing and Local Gov-

ernment placed a preservation order on Holyrood House "in view of the undoubted merit of the building." A "prize piece of ministerial meddling," fumed the local press. "Ah," purred the Clerk to the Council to the elected members, "you cannot pull it down, [but] they cannot compel you to repair it." (*Spalding Guardian*, 8 June 1956). And so it was. They didn't. And the rains came and found out the places that were weak and the mortar crumbled and the timbers began to rot.....



VINYL

AND THE NEW LOCAL PLAN

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE. One blanked-out window above would be prohibited under the new *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan*; the other not. Having difficulty? Well you may. The only difference is that the vinyl film on the left is stuck on the outside of the glass (prohibited), and that on the right on the inside (permitted).

Yet in their appearance and their harmful impact on our town centres they are identical. Members may recall the two pages of Spalding's blanked-out windows pictured in the Newsletter three years ago. They are garish, strident intrusions on the streetscape and kill footfall and therefore retail business. No-one crosses the road to look at a pumped-up parsnip or zoomed-up beer cans. In effect, it's like being assailed by a succession of gross advertising hoardings at eye-level or, if like B&M, by a blank wall.

The Society has not felt it could sit back and do nothing any longer. In one of its responses, therefore, to consultations on the *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan* it proposed the following:-

'The blanking-out of shop windows by opaque or semi-opaque vinyl film, blinds, or the rear of cabinets, display shelves or panels will not be permitted.'

The examining Inspector and officers involved were evidently convinced, and the following appears in the final version of the *Plan*:

'The blanking out of shop windows by externally-positioned opaque or semi-opaque blinds or vinyl film or by other means will not be permitted.'

Unfortunately, however gratifying this is, the insertion of the words *externally-positioned* will render the provision self-sabotaging. All a developer has to do is to apply the vinyl inside the window instead of outside. The blight remains.

The root of the problem lies in the national Regulations for the Control of Advertisements, drawn up well over 20 years ago and now seriously out of date. The blanking-out of shop windows has only become a practice quite recently, so the Regulations naturally have nothing to say about it. The nearest they get to a regulation that would involve shop windows is the one that gives "deemed consent" to virtually any "advertisements displayed inside buildings". Hence the problem. Hence the absurd anomaly of the photos above, where the essentially identical treatment of shop windows is both permissible and not permissible. As one of the officers drawing up the new *Local Plan* said to us: "We've done the best we could within the present planning regulations."

In that case, we can only conclude that the present national regulations are no longer fit for purpose.

Accordingly, the Society has written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government urging the need for the regulations regarding shop windows to be brought up to date, along the lines we have suggested.

We are also bringing the need to the attention of the Planning Inspectorate, Civic Voice, our MP, and various influential columnists in the national press. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.



This way for top brands at HUGE savings ▶ ▶ ▶

it says on the window. But why not remove the vinyl, put some bargain brands on display and open the doors instead, attracting in passing custom? B&M are not exactly short of internal space, now they've taken over the much larger Homebase store in Westlode Street as well.



SPALDING
7



After the chimneys, the windows. These ornate bow-windows and square bays are all to be found to the south and west of St.Thomas's Road, where there was a burst of house-building in late Victorian and Edwardian times; and there are others scattered about the town, too. Again, it would be interesting to know the procedure. Were the frames architect-designed for each house, or taken from pattern books (with selection by the builder and/or client), or the imaginative work of individual master-carpenters?

These are not mansions or villas, but modest little terraced houses, as the two bottom left pictures show. It is sad that many of them are now marred by insensitively inserted double-glazing units. It *can* be sensitively done. What makes the current vogue for new-build Edwardian pastiche so depressing, however, is their overall repetitive meanness: whether the houses are terraced or semi-detached, there's rarely any detailing or eaves overhang. At the most a little canopy over the front door.



◀ Page 2] landscape, but we argued from the start for something more specific in the new one – i.e. the need to protect that quintessential feature of the fen landscape: the long, level sweep to the horizon, where a cluster of trees and a church spire pinpoint a village. Gratifyingly, the new *Local Plan* took this up, although as first drafted the spotlight on Boston Stump rather overshadowed the rest. We pointed this out, and as a result Policy 29 now includes the following provision: “Distinctive features of the South East Lincolnshire historic environment will be conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced

..... including the dominance within the landscape of church towers, spires and historic windmills.”

4. And there were several other smaller modifications we managed to achieve.

Overall, setting aside the vast proliferation of new housing and the expansion of Springfields, the Plan says most of the right things, although it is almost as vague and generalised in parts as the *National Planning Policy Framework*, leaving a good deal to subjective – and therefore contestable – judgement.

JOHNSON FOUNTAIN

THE FINAL DESTINATION of the Johnson Drinking Fountain has been handed over to the prospective town centre regeneration steering group. We shall argue strongly for a town centre location, preferably the Market Place.

Interestingly, Sleaford has just received a grant of £34,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of their Victorian drinking fountain, the shortfall being made up of contributions from North Kesteven District Council, Sleaford Town Council and the Dulverton Fund via the Lincolnshire Community Foundation. The Sleaford Civic Trust sees the restoration as part of the fightback against the 35m plastic bottles used every day in the UK, most of them then thrown away. Something we ourselves have argued in connection with the restoration of the Johnson Fountain.

Come on, Spalding, don't let Sleaford make all the running!

SHOP WATCH

- Quality Street, 698g tub: W.H.Smith **£6**. (Sainsbury's **£5**; Aldi **£3.99**.)
- Christmas gift money-wallet: W.H.Smith **£2.25**. (Sainsbury's **£2 & £1**; Market **30p**; Wilko's **25p**.)
- 'Easy-peelers': Marks & Spencer's **£2.50 for 7**. (Market: **£1 for 27**.)
- Hot cross buns: the entrance eye-catcher at Sainsbury's on **5 January!**

SAVING THE PLANET

A MIDST the forest of waving placards in the recent children's Friday strike to demand stronger government action against potentially disastrous climate change, two of the felt-penned messages on card-board particularly caught your editor's eye – for their unerring aim, wit, economy and memorableness.



SINCE the plastic bag charge was introduced in 2015, use has dropped more than 85%.

Chairman: David Jones, 19 Ladywood Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2DA. 01775 766145
Secretary: Marian Boxall, 78A Edinburgh Drive, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2RT. 01775 725293
Treasurer: Melvyn Price, 3 Morus Close, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2QL. 01775 722908
Newsletter: John Charlesworth, 37 Regent Street, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2YN. 01775 768303
Registered Charity Number 259956 **Website** www.spaldingcivicsociety.org

affiliated to

