



# SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2015

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I HOPE you have all had a happy start to 2015. The Society's committee is busy as always, striving to help make Spalding a better place in which to live. Recent activities include meeting our new Town Centre Manager, with whom we hope to be working for the good of the whole community.

There are people in our midst who are unhappy about the numbers of Eastern Europeans living amongst us. Understanding Russian and a certain amount of Polish as I do, I can assure everybody that the conversations that I overhear in the supermarket are not the least bit threatening, but are simply about everyday concerns similar to those of British people – such as family, what to have for dinner and where to go at the weekend. Migrant workers, on whom our local economy has become dependent, just happen to spend more of their lives outdoors than established locals, and are therefore more conspicuous. Fifteen years ago complaints were all about the life of the town being dominated by pensioners, but that seems to have been forgotten!

So where are our children and young adults? Out of sight, largely at home, absorbed in their electronic games, leading inactive lives. Thirty years ago well over one hundred pupils cycled to the Grammar School; this week there are no more than fifteen cycles parked at the school, and even in summer there will be fewer than thirty.

We see part of our Civic Society activity as encouraging people to come out of their corners and engage with their town and what it has to offer. This means making sure that the built environment is attractive – beautiful even, may I venture? – so that we all positively enjoy it and feel comfortable there; and we will continue to press for appealing shop fronts and respect for the traditional aspects of buildings and the importance of the market, for example. Getting some public art into the centre of Spalding should increase the feeling of well-being amongst residents and visitors alike, and we are working actively towards this end. As you will also see in this Newsletter, we see the need to promote public well-being by defending the retention of public green spaces, which we are notoriously short

of in Spalding. Thus, the threat to the Chiltern Drive Playing Field is high on the list of our concerns at the moment – and not just because I have grandchildren on the estate, who would not otherwise be able to get to a decent playing field without a long walk and adult supervision.

Our Annual General Meeting is coming up in March. This year we plan to break the usual report up with opportunities for members and guests to join in discussion of the various issues as they come up. We need to hear other voices than just those who sit round a committee table. We hope that you will like the idea, which will give us fresh impulses to be the best Civic Society we can be. To this end, we hope members will make every effort this time to bring along a friend and introduce them to the work of the Society. There must be many people in the town who support our aims and only need to be shown how they can get involved. It could be helping further Blue Plaque research, or joining the Newsletter delivery team, or showing us how to make effective use of the social media, or contributing ideas to improve the attractiveness of the Market Place, which we have been asked to do. There is plenty of opportunity, large or small, for all those who care for our built environment and would like to see it enhanced. Please help us to locate people who are as concerned as we are and want to “do their bit”.

David Jones

**For the diary**

**AGM**

**Tuesday 24 March**

**7.30**

**Spalding G.S. Business Centre**

- What should be top of the Town Centre Manager's list?
- What do you want to see on the Bull & Monkey site?
- Do we make the most of our public spaces?  
Or green spaces? Or shop fronts?
- What lessons could we learn from other market towns?  
What can we be proud of?
- What questions should we be asking all our council  
election candidates?

**Bring a friend and join the discussion.**

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## DISPOSSESSED?

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“CHILDREN in our towns and cities are being robbed of safe places to play,” began a recent article in the national press. Since the 1970s the area in which children roam without adults has decreased by 90%. “Where can they run around unsupervised?” Housing estates are built on the playing fields and rough patches children used to inhabit (*The Guardian*, 7 January 2015).

In Spalding at the moment, however, the threat is not houses but graves. The Council wants to lop off three-quarters of the Chiltern Drive Playing Field – to extend the Cemetery – without any replacement for its loss.

The planning application was first submitted in 2011 and, not surprisingly, provoked an outcry from the local community, including a 33-name petition. Not only has the field been providing local youngsters with a safe football and kick-about space for at least 16 years, but other uses mentioned on the petition include rugby, play, park, park with grandchildren, and jogging. In other words, it’s the sort of green open-air informal leisure space that all urban communities need. Dispossessing a community of such a space raises vital issues.

First, Spalding has barely half the green playing space it ought to have for a town of its size (*South Holland Local Plan*, Ch.7). It’s a deficit that calls for *increasing* the town’s green leisure space, not taking more of it away.

Second, there is a covenant on the field, restricting its use “*for any other purpose than amenity land playing field park or other amenity use*” – signed up to by the Council when it bought the land in 1982.

Third, it flouts South Holland’s own planning policies. These declare that people, “particularly children and the elderly, [should] have access to open space close to where they live”. Development must “not cause material harm to residential amenity” and “the quality of life for residents [remain] unimpaired”.

Fourth, Sport England has objected strongly to the loss of playing field space, especially as no replacement playing area is being offered.

Admittedly, the Council is in a difficult position. It has a duty to provide burial space, and Spalding Cemetery is nearing capacity. Conveniently, Chiltern Drive Playing Field is next door, across a dyke, and just beyond it more land has been identified for possible further extension, when the playing field in its turn too becomes full (Interim



Report to the Policy Development Panel, 2012). It all seems to fit together neatly as the solution to a demand that won’t go away – if only it wasn’t a playing field.

Given the unanswerable case to refuse the application, one might by now have expected a search for an alternative solution to be under way. Not so. The Chiltern Drive application has been revived. And so one looks to see what response to the case is being offered.

The further overall reduction of the town’s green leisure space is simply ignored. As is the flouting of planning policies. With regard to the restrictive covenant, the hope is that by giving itself prior planning permission the Council will then be in a “stronger” position to get the covenant removed.

As for Sport England’s opposition, it is proposed to mark out a formal football pitch on another field (Park Close). Which rather misses the point. Park Close Playing Field cannot be expanded, and it is the loss of an actual physical area of land that is at issue, not the loss of a few pitch markings. The town’s 44% overall deficit is still being made worse. The youngsters of the Ladywood estate will still lose their playing field. This is no answer at all.

And there are other drawbacks. “I speak on behalf of me and my 3 brothers,” explains one Ladywood lad to the Planning Department. “In the summer months we love to go down our park which is a minute walk from our house to play football. Park Close playing field would be a good 20 min walk and not safe for my younger brothers to go alone.”

The Park Close field is indeed a full 20 minutes’ walk away, mostly along the A151 (West Elloe Avenue) and the busy Park Road, and involves crossing the B1356, one of the main roads into Spalding.

Moreover, we understand that the extra land identified for further extending the Cemetery beyond the Chiltern Drive Playing Field has been found to be unavailable. Eventually, therefore, completely fresh ground will have to be found elsewhere. The neat, two-step extension envisaged no longer appears to be on the cards.

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# OUR JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

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*Colin Ward is a director of Live Promotions Events Ltd. and was the drummer in Sounds Force 5, the young local group that supported the renowned rock bands at Barbecue '67 in the Spalding Bulb Auction in May 1967.*

**T**HE LEGENDARY American-born Jimi Hendrix is widely accepted as one of the most influential electric guitarists of all time and one of the twentieth century's most celebrated musicians. It is not widely known or accepted that this iconic figure leapt into prominence here in the market town of Spalding.

Jimi Hendrix was discovered in June 1966 by Chris Chandler of The Animals, who, excited by his potential, brought him to the UK and, together with bass player Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell, formed The Jimi Hendrix Experience. In October, only one week after its formation, The Jimi Hendrix Experience toured France.

In January the band performed at London's famous Marquee Club, taking the club by storm and breaking all attendance records.

In March they toured the UK as supporting act to the American Group the Walker Brothers.

And in May ... 29 May, 1967 ... a pop festival was planned for Spalding featuring such groups as Cream, Pink Floyd, The Move, Zoot Money, Geno Washington and his Ram Jam Band, and – top of the bill – The Jimi Hendrix Experience.

Historically, Barbecue '67 is the first true rock festival in the world, pre-dating the legendary Monterey Pop Festival in California, by at least a month. Barbecue '67 was Jimi's first true festival-topping experience.

Local group Sounds Force 5 were booked to play in between each of the acts, and also had the opportunity of meeting the stars backstage prior to their appearance, including Hendrix.

I remember meeting Jimi as if it was yesterday. He seemed very nervous, but was happy to talk. But whilst we were in the makeshift dressing-room, the doors were forced open by the raging fans, who grabbed whatever clothing they could find. "I've got Jimi's shirt!" yelled one of the fans as he raced away. "No, he hasn't," said Jimi, "it's yours, Colin."

Jimi went on stage and gave a wild performance, playing his guitar with his teeth and behind his back,



before finally setting fire to his Fender guitar with lighter fuel. After the performance Jimi went on to become someone who changed people's whole conception of a 'performer'.

On 17 September 1970, the day after playing his last show at Ronnie Scott's Club in London, he was found unconscious in his London hotel room, having vomited in his sleep due to barbiturate intoxication, and shortly afterwards was pronounced dead.

To this day Jimi Hendrix is still an internationally iconic figure, recognised as one of the biggest influential musicians in

the development of hard rock and heavy metal music.

At the height of his career he lived at 23 Brook Street, London W1, where English Heritage have installed a Blue Plaque. As there is a Blue Plaque celebrating where Jimi lived, it is only fitting that there should be one here in Spalding, where he made his first major appearance in Britain, at also possibly the world's first true pop festival. **Colin Ward**

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◀ Page 2] The choice would therefore seem to be as follows. On the one hand, a stop-gap measure that can only briefly meet the Cemetery's needs, at the cost of destroying a whole estate's green open playing space, now and forever. And on the other, a more far-sighted way forward: that is, finding a site for a new cemetery. This will be required anyway, to meet the needs of a vastly expanded Spalding in the years ahead – 2500 new houses already approved for Holland Park and many times that number being written into the emerging local plan.

We expressed our concerns when the application to take over the Chiltern Drive Playing Field first appeared in 2011 and again when it re-surfaced last year. The Society will always fight to preserve, enhance and increase the green spaces in our town, not least for the happiness and well-being of Spalding's children now and in the future.

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## PLANNING MATTERS

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THE **Western Relied Road** has been moving rapidly up the agenda. Phase 1 is expected to be complete by 2016/17, and Phase 2 is now one of the County Council's four "infrastructure priorities". Phase 1, from north of Luck's Bridge on the B1172 to the huge Holland Park development on Spalding Common, will throw a lot more traffic onto Bourne Road and Winsover Road, which will already be suffering increased hold-ups from heavier use of the up-graded railway line. Gridlock threatens. It is not surprising, therefore, that Phase 2, from Holland Park to Pinchbeck Road somewhere near Wardentree Lane, is regarded as "critical" for relieving town-centre traffic and is now a top LCC priority.

SHDC policy with regard to **open space** has recently been changed. The Council will no longer adopt open green leisure space in large housing developments. Developers will have to make other arrangements for its maintenance. It's too early to say how effective or otherwise this may prove to be. But green open space always seems to be under threat. For example, the Chiltern Drive proposals (*see p.2*), the nibbling away at the green havens in sheltered housing enclaves for car parking, and piecemeal boundary fencing encroaching into open-plan estates. Future proposals for the Castle Field and Sports Complex will need careful watching. Members are asked to keep their eyes and ears open for any threats to green open space, large or small, and let us know at once if they get wind of any.

Sometime last year the Council commissioned a £20,000 **Car Parks and Markets Review**. The consultants were due to report last September. We are still waiting.

The town centre is swamped with **hot-food take-aways**, particularly in New Road and Westlode Street and along Winsover Road. An application to add yet another in New Road has wisely been refused four times with an appeal dismissed. Why on earth then has approval just been given to turn the Station Gates pub into a hot-food take-away?

When we are unhappy about a planning application, we always try to make positive suggestions if we can. It was particularly pleasing, therefore, to find these being adopted in two recent cases. In one, our landscaping suggestions were included in the conditions attached to the approval; and in the other, when the application was withdrawn and then resubmitted, the modifications were very much what we had suggested.

**Planning Sub-Committee**

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## MUCH APPRECIATED

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- **The Bull and Monkey** – for the Council's clean-up of this prominent eyesore as part of its 'Pride in South Holland' initiative, after years of heedless neglect from its owners - now footing the clean-up bill.
- **The Red Lion** – repainted and generally smartened up.
- Formerly **Margaret's** at the corner of Broad Street and Herring Lane – replacement of the incongruous 30s metal windows with the sash windows proper to the age of the building and a general smartening up.
- The former **Wimpy Bar** – long empty but now back in business as Lloyd's Pharmacy. Also the even longer empty little **shop next to the Free Press offices**, now a men's and boys' hairdresser's.
- **Bulley Davey Accountants** on London Road – for the clear, elegant lettering of its new fascia sign.



(Contrast the constant corporate re-branding itch of national firms, all too often resulting in restless, jazzed up fascias and signs which they expect to impose on any building they operate from, however inappropriate its style for the building's age or architectural style.)

- The cracking **jazz combo** busking in the town centre on market days in December, a real shopping tonic in the dreary weather.
- The stunning 'Sleeping Beauty' Christmas tableau just inside the entrance to **Baytree Nurseries**, and the inventive Christmas display in the **Unique Cottage Studios** window in the Crescent.
- **LCC Highways** – for the long-awaited replacement of the bashed bollard in Red Lion Street.
- **The White Horse** – for the re-thatched roof ridge.
- **Holland House** – how much more noticeable its handsome frontage has become with the demolition of the Tax Office, not to mention its interesting rear elevation revealed again after 50 years.
- And a warm welcome for the re-opening of **Pacey's** in Red Lion Street.



# INTERVIEW

with the Town Centre Manager

Dennis Hannant grew up in Market Harborough, and at 17 joined the Army as a chef. Commissioned into the Army Catering Corps in 1991 (since amalgamated into the Royal Logistics Corps), he has been a food supply manager, catering manager and catering trainer and has worked extensively with the Army Reserves, dealing with welfare and career policy. He is also a semi-professional singer and entertainer. Married, with two grown-up girls, he lives at Billingborough near Sleaford.

● **After a very different career, what attracted you to the job of Town Centre Manager?** I enjoy organising and managing events and also helping others to improve and develop, both of which are aspects of the job.

● **What do you feel are the town centre's most attractive features?** The historic buildings, such as Ayscoughfee Hall and the Magistrates Court, and the unique independent shops, especially in the Crescent. The fact that the town is very compact and everywhere can be reached on foot within a few minutes is also a big plus point.

● **What two other small towns do you think have particularly attractive centres – what makes them so?** Both are in Leicestershire. *Uppingham* has beautiful shops, pubs and restaurants, complementing its chocolate-box houses and cottages. It has well-laid-out seating areas with complementary flower-tubs, etc. *Market Harborough* has its old school and church and well-laid-out pedestrian-only areas, with a nice walk along the River Welland and a park not too far away.

● **How do you feel the attractiveness of Spalding's centre might be improved?** a) We need to look after what we already have; a number of the

buildings are in need of repair and maintenance (particularly at first-floor level, where there is broken guttering and plants growing out of cracks); and a large number of the shop fronts need some refurbishment and a coat of paint.

b) The Market Place could well be redesigned, so that the stall-market space could be reviewed, the flexibility for events increased, and the creation of a café culture encouraged, especially during the summer, with even maybe a permanent covered market (as at Leicester, although of course smaller).

● **What possible uses might there be for the handsome, historic and currently functionless Johnson Hospital and the Magistrates Court?** I have not been inside either, but perhaps the Magistrates Court could be used as a multi-use centre (i.e. museum/ art gallery/ business centre/ charity HQ/ Citizens' Advice Centre; and the Hospital could be converted into flats and homes for retired people, as its size would allow for a community centre, gymnasium and rooms and areas for clubs and workshops, etc.

● **And if you could wave a magic wand ... ?** I would ban chewing-gum and hire a full-time street cleaner / rubbish collector, with a yellow barrow.

### 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.....

Post Code..... Telephone.....

E-mail.....

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

Unveiling of the plaque to



**For the diary**

by  
**Sounds Force Five**

**Friday, 20 February**

**2.00 pm**

The Red Lion, Market Place, Spalding



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## ALL CHANGE

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IF YOU WANT to find out about a planning application, you will now be faced by a two-tier system. The Council's web-site no longer gives the complete picture. That is available only on the Council Office screens in Priory Road.

The *public* web-site now contains the following:- the application form; all the plans and supporting information; comments from the ward members, from statutory consultees (such as the LCC Highways Department and the Drainage Board), and from bodies with a semi-official interest (such as the Civic Society and Pedals); and eventually the terms of the decision notice. What you will no longer find on your screen are comments from ordinary members of the public, residents, those most affected by the proposal. To see these you will have to consult the screens in the Priory Road offices.

The planning site there will display the full relevant information as before – except of course for anything that may be confidential.

Why has the change been made? It is partly a matter of concern about contravening the Data Protection Act (where comments from the general public might contain sensitive information such as telephone numbers, etc.), and partly that in some cases lengthy exchanges between residents have apparently developed – comments about comments – progressively losing sight of the actual nature of the application.

Nothing is being hidden. It's just now more difficult to get at the full picture. And it is the same for ward members and members of the Planning Committee as it is for the general public. If they want to know the strength of local feeling on a controversial application and what it is that is particularly concerning people\*, it will mean a visit to the Priory Road offices. And that goes for the press, too.

Clearly we have some reservations about the new system, which may turn out to be groundless once it has settled in.

One final word of warning, though. If “**Consultation: There are no documents for this section**” turns up on your screen, it may be untrue. (Documents – i.e. comments from members of the public – may well in fact have been received and be displayed on the Priory Road screens. This should be stated.) Council officers agree the program's misleading wording needs correcting.

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\* The Planning Department is still debating whether to post petitions on the general web-site or not.

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## SOCIETY NOTES

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A WARM WELCOME to new members Susan and Barry Drew and Stephanie Hewat-Jaboor.

As our fourth Blue Plaque draws near to installation, a big thank-you to Judy Chapman for stage-managing all that is involved behind the scenes, some of it perhaps not immediately obvious. For example, if the plaque is going up on a listed building, as the Jimi Hendrix plaque is on the Red Lion, then an application has to be made to the SHDC Planning Department for ‘Listed Building Consent’. And so on.

We were saddened to learn of the sudden death of Bill Johnson towards the end of last year. Although not a member of the Society, he fought tenaciously for greater public access to the Halley Stewart Playing Field, a cause also on the Society's agenda.

‘**What? Where? When?**’ The Society's detectives were faced in November with some enjoyably tricky film clips showing scenes from Lincolnshire's past, particularly when trying to decide *when*. For example, one clip contained shire horses, tractor and crop-spraying helicopter all at work on one farm during the same year. Various periods of history seemed to have been compressed into one, and it wasn't until one or two sharp-eyed and sharp-memory-ed members noticed that one of the younger men was wearing jeans that we were able to arrive at a reasonably accurate date for the scenes. Perhaps the most alarming clip showed quarry work near Stamford, carried out with hand labour and the most rudimentary of tools and equipment and a complete absence of protective clothing, hard hats and goggles. Health and safety? Never heard of it!

Many thanks therefore to member Peter Ryde for the most enjoyable quiz programme he had put together from the Lincolnshire and Humberside Film Archives, which incidentally illustrated his invaluable work over the years in building up, rescuing and curating this precious testimony to our past that would otherwise have found itself flung piecemeal into land-fill.

### Subscriptions

**are now due (£8 single; £12 for two at the same address; students in full-time education free). Please return with the enclosed slip to Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN. If you get the Newsletter by e-mail, please print off the slip (p.5) and return to the Treasurer as above.**

**Chairman:** David Jones, 19 Ladywood Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2DA.

**Secretary:** Marion Brassington, 55 Pinchbeck Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QF.

**Treasurer:** Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN.

**Newsletter:** John Charlesworth, 37 Regent Street, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2YN.

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