

SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2016

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

SO MUCH HAPPENING – and not happening... Where to start? As far as the Society is concerned, the workload falling increasingly on a few shoulders. The scrutiny of planning applications takes time, but that is the price of vigilance, as for example in spotting the proposed transfer of some of our already scarce public green space to house-building (*page 8*). Please find us a couple of willing volunteers – it does have its detective interest, puzzling out the details of planning applications, site layout and impact on the neighbouring properties! There are also the positive opportunities to make a difference, as with our Blue Plaques and Public Art projects. And you don't have to wait for an appeal at the AGM – just make yourselves known, and you will be assured of a warm welcome.

In town, we are pleased to see some progress on the Magistrates' Court building. Future use? I would suggest that it would make a rather good courthouse – it is a disgrace that it was ever closed. With thousands more houses planned, the lack of a courthouse in Spalding will create even more car journeys to Grantham and Lincoln. Of course I do not wish to imply that our new residents will all be criminals, but there will surely also be witnesses and court employees living in South Holland.

The eyesores in Spalding remain, and nothing seems to be happening. Did I hear a few weeks ago that the Government was musing about levying Council Tax on sites that have planning permission but remain undeveloped? It seems a brilliant idea to me, but the trail seems to have gone cold; I wonder why? It was encouraging to hear some movement from the Council on the Adams car park (between

Crescent and Market Place), an ugly wasted space in the centre of town, derelict now for over 50 years.

Government cuts will have their detrimental effect on our town when the County Council no longer funds grass cutting on roadside verges. Will neighbours take it upon themselves to cut grass on the street in front of their homes? There is a patch of grass cared for by the Council next to Lord Porter's garden.... On the plus side, after the excessive grass cutting alongside main roads outside town, there may in future be wild flowers there again.

In October I attended the Lincolnshire Transport Conference, about linking Spalding better to the outside world. A lady from Virgin Trains proudly told us how we would benefit from more direct trains from Lincoln to London – none of them via Spalding. Did she really imagine Spalding people going to Lincoln to catch a train to London? How out of touch huge organisations like Virgin Trains can be, and how easily forgotten a place like Spalding. To be able to persuade the rail company to route the odd train through Spalding, we would need to present evidence that, for example, enough people would wish to take a train to London at a given time. A fair point, but how can one prove demand for something that doesn't exist? And as for the 'need' to dual the A16, with lorries now allowed to go at 50mph, many still think it worth spending many millions to shave a very few minutes off the journey to Peterborough – and the point that I made about nearly half of the lorries running empty was cheerfully ignored. We all felt better for having said our bit, but what can change when, for example, Network Rail possesses only one spare train set for the whole country? One could despair. **David Jones**

A warm welcome to new member
Tim Barzycki.

Existing members, please renew your subscription by filling in the form on p.8 or printing it out and sending to the Treasurer with your subscription – address also on p.8.

Spalding Grammar School Business Block

Speaker to be arranged

For the diary

Tuesday, 22 March 7.30



UNVEILING

VERY DEFINITELY A SOCIETY FIRST: an event accompanied by a brass band! After a crisp, sparkling twenty minutes of music for the Saturday shoppers in Hall Place, the Boston Salvation Army Band moved up to Bridge Street for the unveiling of the Society's fifth blue plaque.

It was an honour to have William Booth's great-grandson, Colonel Bramwell Booth, to perform the unveiling. In his speech to the 80-strong gathering he stressed the grinding poverty that Booth was all too familiar with as a teenager. William was 14 when his father died, leaving the family of five penniless. Apprenticed to a pawnbroker, he became even more aware of the destitution and distress that drove the poorest to bring in their last possessions to provide food for their ragged, barefoot children. Hence, the Salvation Army's equal emphasis on social work as well as evangelism. But it had been in Spalding as a young Free Methodist minister, Booth later declared, that "God helped me to become a power among the people."

"Each plaque," added John Hayes, "is a celebration of who we are, which in turn depends upon the memory of who we've been."

Our thanks to all who contributed to a very successful event – particularly of course to Colonel Booth, but also to Kevin Pallister and an anonymous donor for funding the plaque, to Lt.Colonels Sylvia and Peter Dalziel for their invaluable work in engaging the Salvation Army so closely in the event, and to our own Judy Chapman for research, getting permission from the Boot's property division, ordering the plaque, and just about everything else you can think of. And the sun shone – again!



Arthur Ingram

[Question answered:- At 23 William Booth was a street preacher in the slums of London, so how had Mr.Major Shadford and the Free Methodists in Spalding, looking for a new minister, got to know about him? Hardly had the matter been raised in the last Newsletter than the answer came from one of the Salvation Army members at the unveiling. Shadford, it seems, was the friend of a Mr.E.H. Rabbitts, a prosperous London boot-manufacturer and Free Methodist, who had taken the young Booth under his wing and encouraged him to put pawnbroking behind him and devote himself to preaching full-time, and he must clearly have mentioned his promising young protégé to Shadford. The invitation to Spalding followed.]

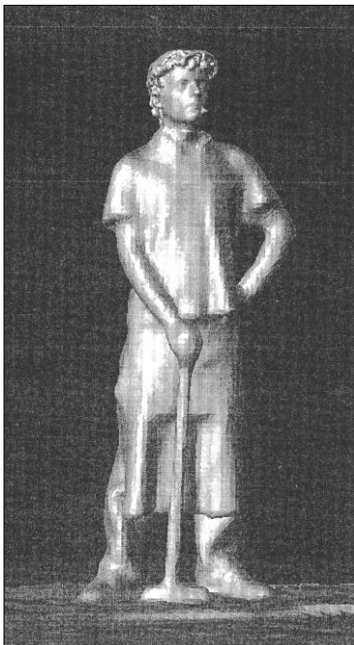
Unveiling of

JOSEPH HILLIER'S

Spalding Sculpture Trail

Friday, 22 April
12 noon
Assemble front of Red Lion

**For
the
diary**



MARKET ART PROJECT

AS THE DATE of the unveiling of the Society's first public art commission approaches (Friday, 22 April – *see opposite*), what stage are the little figures at at the moment?

By the last Newsletter in October a number of local people had posed for Joseph Hillier's 3D imaging camera and were captured inside his computer. Here each image could be turned this way and that in search of the most effective angle and be manipulated in all sorts of other ways too: the background eliminated, for example, the rear of the figure shaved flat if it was eventually to be mounted on a wall, or a limb adjusted slightly to fuse it with a prop so that the final figure would be less vulnerable.

The faces of course remain untouched. These are local people: the young blacksmith, the drainage engineer, the farmer and author, the market trader.

By now the figure is beginning to look statue-like (*left*), but it is still only an electronic image. The figures have no physical actuality. That is the next stage, when the electronic image is fed into a 3D printer and, layer by plastic layer, a solid physical object built up. It was these plastic models, given a coating of graphite dust to make them look like metal, that we saw at the end of January (*right*).

Where are we now? The planning applications for their sites in the town centre have been submitted – Hall Place, Red Lion Street, the Market Place, the Crescent – while the little figures are waiting to be cast in bronze.



WAR MEMORIAL



THE LISTING of our war memorial in Ayscoughfee Gardens was raised to Grade I last November. Describing it as “an eloquent witness to the impact of world events on this community, and the sacrifices it made in the conflicts of the C20”, Heritage England said:

Sir Edwin Lutyens's “Tuscan pavilion is a precursor to the shelter buildings built in the cemeteries of the Western Front..... The principal elements of the memorial, the Tuscan pavilion and the Stone of Remembrance, stand within a memorial garden – an exceptional departure for Lutyens among his English memorials – created from an element of an older formal garden.”

Lutyens designed 58 memorials in all for this country and the Western Front cemeteries, including the Cenotaph in Whitehall. His first design for Spalding was more elaborate than the one we have now, which was chosen by popular vote from the five simpler versions he later submitted.

MUCH APPRECIATED

- **Hill's Department Store** – for their excellent Christmas window-dressing again, their best yet.
- **SHDC Parks Department** – for maintaining the splash of colour in the Hall Place planters through the dreary winter months.
- **LCC Highways** – for repairing and repainting the Holland Road footbridge.
- **Boston College** – for replacing the missing tree from the Red Lion Quarter planters and their further maintenance; they had begun to look a bit neglected.
- **SHDC** – for proposing a contemporary pavilion for Ayscoughfee Gardens instead of playing safe with pastiche.
- **SHDC** – for at last replacing the piece of missing front wall at the Council Offices. (Pity it isn't brick to match the other side.)
- **Simpson's Butcher's** (Hall Place) - for clearing the obscuring clutter from their windows and Aspire (Crescent) for unblanking a window. More, please.
- **The view of the Parish Church spire** opened up by the Holland Road development and previously hidden by the Tax Office.



THE CRESCENT ▶



WINSOVER ROAD ▶



THE SHEEPMARKET ▶



STATION STREET ▶



STATION STREET (continued) ▶



MARKET PLACE & NEARBY ▶



WESTLODE STREET ▶



VINYL BLIGHT

SHOP WINDOW after shop window blanked-out. (They're not empty.) It's vinyl blight. Garish, down-at-heel, unfriendly. Footfall-killer and a real visitor turn-off. With the Halifax, Boot's, B&M and other nationals as much to blame as eastern European mini-markets. Despite the best efforts of Spalding in Bloom and the Parks Department, it's an uphill struggle against the kind of tacky street scene shown in the photographs. These are windows that say, "Keep out," unlike attractively set-out windows that say, "Come in and see more." What a difference if all our shop windows had the vitality and actuality of the Tuesday and Saturday market stalls. The town centre is selling itself short at the moment. Need it be so? Might some of the following be worth a try?

- Rigorous use of the Council's existing powers to refuse hot-food takeaway applications if the cumulative effect is "likely to harm the character or shopping function of the area".
- Rapid adoption of the emerging Local Plan policy to [Page 7 ▶



PLANNING MATTERS

The Next 20 Years

THE NEW LOCAL PLAN will guide the development of the district over the next 20 years. It is out for consultation at the moment.

As we go to press the Society has not yet prepared its full response. What follows therefore are just a few preliminary snapshots.

Minuses..... • Parts of the Spalding map are wrong (e.g. the boundary of the Conservation Area, extended about eight years ago; the Welland Hospital still shown, demolished about four years ago).

• Spalding and Pinchbeck more or less joined up into one by a sprawl of housing estates.

• The 3000+ houses planned for north of the Vernatt's are of course *west* of the railway line, whereas virtually all community facilities (from hospital to secondary schools and shopping centre to library) are *east* of the line. Worsening level-crossing problems guaranteed.

• No attempt to deal with Spalding's 44% deficit of green leisure space.

Pluses..... • The recognition that town centres "help foster civic pride [and] promote local identity".

• A policy to prevent town centre "dead frontages" (i.e. where footfall is killed by non-shopping businesses gradually taking over the shops).

• Electrical charging points to be required in public and business carparks.

• A policy to ensure that development "maintain[s] the visual dominance of St.Botolph's Church, Boston, other church towers and spires and traditional windmills in the skyline of each settlement." (The Society can claim some credit for this wider provision to protect the fenland landscape, as an earlier draft mentioned only St.Botolph's.)

A fuller account of the Society's response will appear in the next Newsletter.

February 2016

THE TOWN CENTRE has several shops vacant at the moment or changing use, thus giving us an opportunity to comment on shop front design and improvement. The former **Dryden's** jeweller's in the Market Place is to be divided into two units, one to become a travel agency and the other yet to be determined. A modern clean design was submitted, but was felt on second thoughts to be a lost opportunity for a significant improvement to the Market Place through the restoration of a traditional shop front in keeping with the historic frontage above. The closure of **Welec** on New Road has led to an application for yet another take-away on a street

already full of them, with the bricking up a shop window, another loss of display space.

At last the issue of **vinyl-covered windows**, which we raised two years ago, is to be taken seriously, it seems. The District Council have asked the Chamber of Commerce for ideas towards drawing up a policy. You'll find ours on pp.5 & 7.

Any views or comments you wish us to consider on planning applications can be emailed to the planning team at Spaldingcivicsociety@hotmail.com

Our representative on the Town Centre Management Board is Robert West, who sits along with representatives of the town's trading community, retailers, the night-time economy, police and SHDC. The Lincolnshire County Show road show is expected to be in Spalding on Friday, 13 May, to give a flavour of the show, with marquees for Spalding traders and community and heritage groups. It is expected that Spalding will be invited to the Lincolnshire Show in June.

Pavilion

A NEW PAVILION (or performance space) for Ayscoughfee Gardens will replace the present ramshackle wooden shelter near the children's corner. It is a simple, open structure, with a low platform under a cantilevered roof supported by oak timbers and stainless steel ties. When the acoustic panels are not in place for plays and concerts, the historic boundary wall and trees beyond will be visible through the open structure.

It is adaptable by virtue of its simplicity. (A previous proposal fell between two stools, obvious theatrical features being too rudimentary to do the job properly, whilst hindering its use for concerts.)

It was strange the *Free Press* chose to label the design "futuristic", when its structural principles would have been perfectly familiar to the 15th century carpenters and masons building the original Ayscoughfee Hall. No, it's not an imitation Victorian bandstand with cast-iron curlicues. And, yes, its minimalist style does have a contemporary look. But embracing the contemporary is very much in the Ayscoughfee tradition. The 18th century Johnsons put a "contemporary" Georgian front on their mediaeval mansion, and a century later scrapped it for the "contemporary" Gothic Revival front we see today. In any case, intervening buildings mean that hall and pavilion will never be seen in direct comparison with each other.

Planning Sub-Committee



Flood water reaching the top of the sandbags in London Road

1947 IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DATES in Spalding's history. It was the year of the great flood – and all that followed from it.

At that time there was no tidal barrier on the Welland, and the spring tides reached as far upstream as Market Deeping, causing a potential problem for water coming down the river from the catchment area. However, there were the Cowbit and Crowland washes to allow excess water to flow into them as storage until the tides ebbed.

In the late winter of 1946-7 there was a large volume of water coming down-river to the already full washes. Then the weather turned very cold and froze the whole area for some time. Crowds turned out to skate, with people skating from the Cowbit Road island at Little London right up to Crowland. As a 10-year-old I skated with my mother to Cowbit and back, an enormously thrilling experience for a young lad.

When the thaw eventually came, all would have been well if it had happened slowly. However, a rapid rise in temperature caused the ice and snow to melt in just 36 hours. Together with heavy rain, this caused a huge volume of water to enter the fens to try to escape to the sea but, meeting the incoming spring tides, it could only overtop and breach the banks. I remember standing on the Cowbit side of Little London Bridge and looking south and seeing nothing but a sea of water as far as the eye could see.

The ice had melted into large plates, which were crowding down the river in huge numbers. This caused particular problems at Cowbit, as the wind drove them up onto the road by the church. Men stood by, breaking them up to clear the road.

Much more of a problem developed at Little London Bridge. The terrace of five houses on the island were

Recollections of
OUR OWN FLOOD TIME

engulfed to window level and water was flowing into Cley Lake. As the floes jostled down on this sea of water, they jammed against the bridge. I saw a group of men with long poles pushing the floes under the bridge. Scraping on the underside of the structure, they emerged with a great rush of ice and water and advanced on the town. The action did, however, stop the flooding of the area getting any worse. Even so, water was cascading over Cowbit Road into the Cley Lake area and over London Road into the fields on which the St. Andrew's Road estate now stands.

The banks of the river through the town were sand-bagged to an additional three feet high and, although water rose to the top of the sandbags (*above*), it did not flood the town, though our cellars, on Welland Terrace, were flooded three or four feet deep. The river finally breached its banks down-stream of Crowland, and the threat receded.

The long-term effect of this crisis was the River Welland Major Improvement Scheme, which included the building of the Coronation Channel, completed in 1953, and the sea gates north of the town. Thus, far-sighted men made sure the town would not have any recurrence of a similar nature.

Another long-term result was the replacement of Little London Bridge, as the underside had been so badly damaged by the ice floes.

The downside of these events is that Crowland and Cowbit washes, which were previously a delightful 'nature reserve' with water in the winter and grazing animals in the summer, are now a typical desert of intensive farming.

Brian Hendry

[Some of the scenes described here were filmed by my late father, Mr.A.W.Hendry, and can be seen on South Holland Looks Back, compiled by the Lincolnshire and Humber-side Film Archive. The DVD can be ordered from Prime-time Video Productions, P.O.Box 140, Boston PE22 0ZP (Tel: 01205 750055) at £14.95 + £1.90 postage. Obtainable also from the office of The Voice in Winsover Road.]

◀ Page 5] extend these powers to prevent "dead frontages" – i.e. clusters of shops converted to non-retail uses. The Society is pressing for this to include retail shops with blanked-out windows, which produce equally dead frontages..

- Setting up a shop-fronts awards scheme (most improved frontage? best Christmas window display? etc.).
- Encouraging businesses with no goods to exhibit (such as betting shops, solicitors and building societies) to host regularly changing displays through establishing links with art studios or societies, photographic societies, schools, etc., (like the Unique Studios window in the Crescent).

Meanwhile, attractive shop fronts can be attractive in various ways. To pick a few at random:- the browsables (Stennet's and Inkley's in Francis Street), the stylish (Store Twenty One and M&C in Bridge Street), the superstore that surprises by actually dressing its windows (Wilko's), the inventive (Molsom's Optician's and Hill's Department Store), and setting a standard for charity shops (the two Sue Ryder shops). If only the pictured ones made the same effort!



Severn Road Playing Field

FIELDS UNDER THREAT

WE WERE RIGHT. What was advertised in the summer simply as a transfer of Council assets from one fund to another has indeed turned out to be an intention to seize hold of playing fields for housing – despite Spalding’s 44% shortfall of green leisure space, and despite its being contrary to national policy and the Council’s own existing policies. It also tears up the Conservative pledge before the local elections last May to “provide a publicly accessible woodland and *more*

public open space”. (Giving Moulton some green space whilst simultaneously depriving poorly provided Spalding does not result in “more”.)

A recent public notice declares the Council’s intention to dispose of the Severn Road field to Welland Homes Ltd. (the Council’s own housing company) “to enable the delivery of new housing”. We strongly objected in the summer, and have objected again. We are also following up a point made by the Minister of State for Communities and Local Government in a letter to John Hayes.

The Society supports building more houses for local residents, but **not at the expense of reducing further an already inadequate provision of public green space**, when there are any number of derelict brownfield sites in the town crying out for development. It is on these neglected sites that the houses should go.

REVIEWING THE RIVERSIDE

THE RIVERSIDE is a beautiful feature of our town – particularly the much photographed view from High Bridge towards the Lincolnshire Poacher and the tree-lined stretch between Magellan Way and Haverfield Road. A mere cricket-ball’s throw from the Market Place there are coots to be seen, great-crested grebes, swans, a kingfisher if you’re lucky, and of course the ducks; and some of our finest historic buildings face onto it. It is a green haven right in the town centre. Andrew Petcher, a former SHDC officer, thought it beat the Avon in Stratford, where he grew up.

We are indeed lucky. Yet, somehow, as a town we don’t quite seem to be making the best of it. So we welcome the working group brought together by Councillors Gary Taylor and Jack McLean in November with a view to its improvement. The Society was represented by John Honnor, Annette Faulkner and John Charlesworth. It was an exploratory meeting, and we stressed the need for an overall review and strategy for the river through the town.

One of the problems – as with the town centre – is fragmented responsibilities, i.e. who is responsible for what? (Which may explain why the welcome repainting of the Holland Road footbridge railings over the river stopped short when they became railings along the bank.)

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 (Hon.Treasurer), 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN.

Gift Aid:- By signing the declaration below you will enable the Society to reclaim income tax on your subscription, so that it becomes worth almost a third more at no extra cost to yourself. I wish Spalding and District Civic Society to treat all my subscriptions since 6 April 2000 and all from the date below as Gift Aid.

Signature..... Print..... Date.....

Chairman: David Jones, 19 Ladywood Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2DA. 01775 766145
Secretary: Marion Brassington, 55 Pinchbeck Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QF. 01775 767923
Treasurer: Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN. 01775 722908
Newsletter: John Charlesworth, 37 Regent Street, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2YN. 01775 768303
Registered Charity Number 259956 **Website** www.spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk



INTENTIONALLY BLANK