

# SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

June 2024

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

**W**E HAVE MADE THE CHOICE and I hope that you like the design proposals for the next two commissions for the MARK-IT trail. When I saw Graeme Mitcheson's proposals for a flock of Lincoln Longwool Sheep (see p. 3 ), it was a no-brainer. We *had* to turn them into reality. I believe that they will prove to be iconic. When we think about Milton Keynes, two things come to mind: roundabouts and concrete cows. I believe that the time will come that, when people think of Spalding, they will think of Flower Parades and sheep carved from stone. Likewise. the Lincoln Red bull and calf. Their pure size will give anyone driving from one side of the town to the other a view to remember, and, if they are a visitor, hopefully a reason to stop and investigate our town.

Just as this Newsletter was being finalised, the result of the BID vote was announced. It was a close result. The Yes vote hopefully means that some of the interventions that we all want to see in the town will actually happen. As for the other vote. Well, let's hope that whichever party is in power in a week's time, they will honour commitments that have been made to the town.

It was good to see another successful flower parade, and heartening to see that there are those who are willing to continue to try and deliver future parades. Hopefully, they will succeed. One positive outcome of the last flower parade was that a minor long-standing eyesore has been fixed. I refer to the planters of King's Road. I would



like to thank Cllr. Gary Taylor and Mark Whelan of SHDC for their efforts in the background and Pete Bokestyn, Karen Auty and others from Butters Factory Shop for



making it happen. Whilst there have been a couple of minor incidents, they are still looking good, although now the good weather is here I can see that there might need to be some dead-heading soon. Perhaps this community initiative might lead on to other things? Maybe a revitalisation of Spalding in Bloom?

As this is the first newsletter since our later-than-normal AGM, I would like to thank Brendan D'Abreo and Howard Baxter for stepping up to join our committee, and I would also like to thank Robert West for his many years of service to the Society.

**John Bland**

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## AGM

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**T**HE MYSTERY GUEST SPEAKER advertised for the Society's 64<sup>th</sup> AGM on 4 June remained a mystery unfortunately, as it had not proved possible to pin him down. Instead, there was more time for the next stage of the Society's MARK-IT Trail (formerly Market Art Project). The chosen artist was announced – award-winning Leicestershire sculptor Graeme Mitcheson – followed by an illustrated presentation of the commissioning process, examples of his work elsewhere and his initial designs and maquettes (models) for New Road and the Sheepmarket. (See pp.3&4.) It was felt the right choice had been made, and an animated discussion of the proposals made some thoughtful and valuable points to be passed on to the artist.

Earlier, there were reports on the past year from the Society's officers. Chairman John Bland concentrated on the substantial sums that have come the District's way during the past year:- £20 government million over ten years for being a "left behind" town; £250,000 of Heritage Lottery money for the town centre, especially the riverside; and our own £43,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the MARK-IT Trail. More may be on its way to the town if local business-rate payers vote to create a BID for Spalding. The Society is represented on all the relevant boards and sub-committees

John Bland's planning report high-lighted (a) the increasingly urgent need for a shop front design guide, and (b) the successful deferment of a decision on plans submitted for the monstrously overbearing care home on the Bull and Monkey site.

The Projects and Campaign's report lamented our failure to get the Johnson Drinking Fountain installed in the town centre (as most people in the town had clearly wanted), and the lengthy delay in getting any Council response to our draft of wording for the information board. With regard to the pedestrian area, our proposal for a swing barrier across Broad Street at the Herring Lane junction appears to be gaining favour. Best of all, the MARK-IT Trail is under way again.

The Society's finances were in good shape, reported the Treasurer. The calendar sold out and produced a useful profit for the Society.

As all the officers and committee members were willing to serve again, they were re-elected en bloc and were joined by the welcome addition of Howard Baxter and Brendan D'Abreo.

The line-up therefore for 2024-25 is :- (Chairman and Planning Officer) John Bland, (Secretary) Marian Boxall, (Treasurer) Melvyn Price, (Projects and Campaigns Officer) John Charlesworth, (Committee) David Jones, Alwyn Roffe, Graham Boor, Martin Blake, Valery Gemmell, Howard Baxter and Brendan D'Abreo.

Please don't hesitate to contact any of the above with your concerns about the local built environment, planning proposals or Society matters. Ideas for talks, visits or increasing membership particularly welcome.



## LINCOLNSHIRE REDS AND LONG WOOLS

COMMISSIONING a work of public art is not like choosing a picture for your living room. It will be seen not just by family and friends but by thousands of people, both residents and visitors, over the years – and liked, one hopes.

Seventeen artists expressed an interest in the advertised brief, from Devon to Wales, Yorkshire to north Lincolnshire, even France. One had had work unveiled by the Duke of Edinburgh; another had been to school in Peterborough and knew Spalding well.

All submitted photographs of their work elsewhere, together with a statement of why they found the brief particularly attractive and how they would engage with the public in the process of creating the work, as this last was a condition of the grant from the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. They could choose to apply for the sheep or the cattle or both. Most chose both.

We selected a short list of seven, who now had several weeks to research and develop their ideas, visit the sites and prepare videos, computer images and maquettes and calculate their budgets, ready for interview on 24 April. One of the things we should be looking for was works that would be striking and make an impact, as our MARK-IT commissions so far – Joseph Hillier's 14 small bronzes and Laury Disengremel's *The Hiring* in Hall Place – had been relatively low-key.

The interviews took place in Ayscoughfee Hall's Garden Room, and it was gratifying to encounter the quality of the work being presented to

enliven the Spalding street scene. It was quite moving too to see the amount of time and thought and research that had gone into the proposed art works and the interview presentations, especially as they'd had so short a time.

Harley Budd's livestock would be playful, gentle; James Sutton had devised an inventive way of rendering a sheep's fleece in metal; Rob Neith Nicholson had an elaborate programme for involving the public, and for Sebastien Boyesen the statues and their immediate setting were equally important and would incorporate fragments of poetry.

In the end we chose Graeme Mitcheson, who works mostly in stone, because his design for the cattle sculpture had the boldness and impact we were looking for. And, although we should have liked to commission a second artist for the sheep, Graeme was the only one to offer a *flock* of sheep for the budget allowed. (The pens in the Sheepmarket were built to accommodate 1300 sheep.) [Page 4▶





Graeme Mitcheson's work can be found all over the UK, and includes sculptures commissioned by Sheffield and Wakefield City Councils, English Heritage

and the Woodland Trust. A memorial tribute to former England football manager Sir Bobby Robson is situated in Newcastle city centre and he has created three particularly striking public art works for Caernarfon Castle in North Wales. He is an Associate Member of the Royal British Society of Sculptors.

More of his work is pictured across.

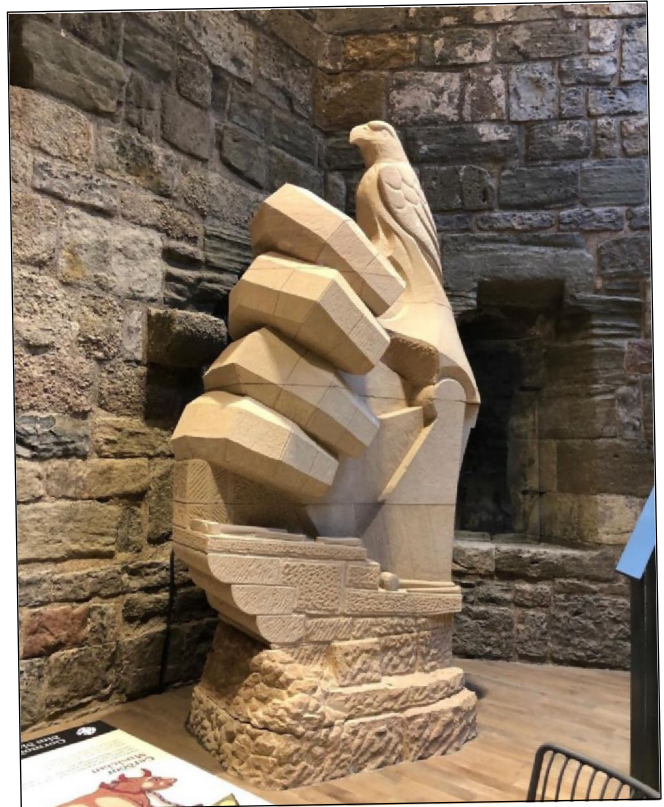
The models and computer images of the sheep and cattle are first thoughts. At this early stage there will be further discussion and site visits before designs are finalised. It is hoped there will be workshops, too.

The finished works are intended for New Road (cattle) and the Sheepmarket (sheep), where these animals were traditionally auctioned until the move to the purpose-built Cattle Market in 1938 – now Sainsbury's car park.

The adjudicating panel comprised John Bland, Nick Jones (Transported Arts), Callum Brazzo representing the younger generation and the Editor. It had been hoped to include a Council officer but this unfortunately encountered timetable difficulties.

### John Charlesworth

Above right:  
**'The Stonemason's Hand'**  
Caernarfon Castle



Below:  
**'Milk Churn Man'**  
Hatton, Derbyshire



*All photographs © Graeme Mitcheson*

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## PLANNING MATTERS

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**B**OTH DAVID JONES AND I have been asked to join the Spalding Town Board. I hope that the Board will be successful in achieving its aims. The website that has been set up now is being populated with information about the Board and its activities. Do take a look at <https://lovespalding.co.uk/> It is just a pity that the survey that was supposed to have been delivered to every home in the town wasn't. I have asked questions, and whilst I have not got the full answers yet, it seems that people working for the national mailing firm engaged failed to make the deliveries. I have been assured that the firm will not be paid, as they have not fulfilled their contract. Were it not for the election, I would have asked whether further time could be requested from the government, so that the complete delivery could take place as intended. The surveys that were completed represent a very low proportion of the town's population. An initial review of the 500 surveys returned undertaken by one of the external consultants appointed to assist the Board does not contain any surprises.

### **Top priorities?**

- Tackling anti-social behaviour and improving community safety;
- More attractions and things to do in the town;
- Improving and tidying up the high street and market place;
- Maintaining Spalding's heritage (e.g. restoration of historical buildings);

### **Priority areas for investment?**

- The town centre;
- The riverside / waterfront area;
- The Market Place.

### **Key areas for improvement?**

- The town centre generally;
- The high street / more shops / fewer empty shops;
- Cleaner / tidier / smartening up;
- Better use of the river / waterfront area;
- Safer / effective tackling of anti-social behaviour.

### **Main areas of ambition for the town?**

- Cleaner / tidier / more attractive;
- A safer place to be / visit (less anti-social behaviour, more footpaths);
- To be somewhere people are proud to live;
- And somewhere people would like to visit (a thriving town);
- A wide offering of shops.

As members will note, these are issues that the Society has been highlighting for years. I hope that the aims of the Board will lead to action that will address the issues that we were talking about over ten years ago. Dare I suggest that one underlying conclusion that can be derived from the survey should be:- Spalding Civic Society have always stood up for the town. Listen to us.

As a result of work on the MARK-IT Trail and the Town Board, I have had limited time to keep an eye on planning applications. It was therefore welcome to hear that both Valery Gemmell and Howard Baxter offer to assist with the planning officer role within the Society.

The main application that has not been resolved yet is the one relating to Hill's former store. Whilst opinion is divided in the town and within the Society, perhaps one way forward is for the Council to meet the requirement of Policy 25 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan. Policy 25 is aimed at supporting the viability of Spalding and Boston Town Centres. The requirement is that "*a review of The Town Centres and Retail Capacity Study will be commenced within one year of the adoption of the Local Plan to review retail capacity, town centre boundaries, primary shopping frontages, etc.*" The plan was adopted in March 2019. Owing to Covid we have not pushed the point but, in the light of the Hill' application, maybe any decision should be deferred until that review is carried out. Just a thought. **John Bland**



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## MISS CHARINTON'S BLUE PLAQUE

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ON SATURDAY MORNING, 18 May, a small crowd gathered outside no.11 London Road to witness the unveiling of our latest Blue Plaque, commemorating Miss Charlotte Charinton (1801-1888), a notable local benefactor, who financed the building of St.Paul's Church, Fulney, and its vicarage and schoolroom. The plaque was placed on the house where Miss Charinton lived for many years, now the home of one of our members, Steven Savage, and the unveiling was carried out by the Vicar of Spalding, the Revd.John Bennett.

In his introductory remarks, Chairman John Bland emphasized Miss Charinton's generosity by reminding us of the high profile of the architect engaged to build the St.Paul's Church complex, Sir George Gilbert Scott, who would presumably not have been the cheapest! John Bland was clearly inspired by her connection to his own ancestors.

The vicar pointed to Miss Charinton's connection with Canon Moore, who had major works done in Spalding Parish Church; Miss Charinton's munificence extended to the restoration of other churches in and around Spalding.

We were fortunate to have in attendance Mr.Lawrence Harper, who was descended from Miss Charinton's great-nephew Revd. Richard Ash. He filled us in on interesting details of family history, explaining how and why Miss Charlotte inherited her father's entire fortune.

After the unveiling, we went to Spalding Baptist Church, where refreshments were prepared for us and lively conversations were held.

The impressions left on me included the value of researching and recording family history - who could have predicted that Miss Charinton would one day achieve a Blue Plaque? - and of the philanthropy, which we seem to have lost, which provided so many important buildings and facilities in Spalding. **David Jones**

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## LEICESTER U3A

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A COACH PARTY of 50 people from Leicester came to Spalding on 19 June. No, not to Springfields, but to Spalding itself. Many people here are unenthusiastic about the town and what it has, or doesn't have, to offer, so it was refreshing to see and hear how out guests from Leicester U3A really appreciated what they saw. They divided into five groups, led by Civic Society members Marian Boxall, Graham Boor, Melvyn Price, David Jones and Pat Wensor. We were deeply grateful for the work Pat Wensor had put into preparing and printing a useful document helping us to explain various aspects of the history of what we were showing our guests. Marian led a "low walking" group of less mobile people on a shorter version of the

tour, a point to consider for future occasions

We are now well prepared for any subsequent visit from elsewhere, having had this experience. Leicester Civic Society may come and visit us one day, and we could visit Leicester in the same way. Interestingly, Veronica Matthew, who led the Leicester U3A group, had created six walking routes in Leicester, to be found on their Ramblers' Association website, with the intention of helping refugees and asylum seekers to become familiar with their city. Maybe we could also bear different target groups in mind when we prepare leaflets on walks around Spalding. Every connection with other people can be a learning experience!

**David Jones**



# CALENDAR 2025



We hope to produce a calendar for 2025 with photographs of Spalding and its surrounding villages and landscapes, including some by members.

We're looking for pictures that capture the countryside, heritage, nature or beauty of the area, whether well-known views or fascinating details that few people may have noticed. Pictures that have a clear seasonal feel, too. They may have been taken a year or two ago or next week. Please send them to John Charlesworth at the address below – as soon as possible – on either disc or memory stick or as prints.

## 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

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

Name ..... Address .....

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

### Gift Aid

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