

SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

June 2025

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

BEFORE OUR AGM, we made an appeal for more people to volunteer to become part of our Committee. I am now expanding that appeal, as I would like the Society to have a pool of volunteers that we can call on. Why? Because these are exciting times for the Civic Movement as a whole. Times that are urgent and when civic societies are absolutely necessary.

Now that we have a Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Authority and we have super-sized councils on their way as a result of Local Government Reform, it is vital for societies in Lincolnshire and across the East Midlands to start working together, so that we can ensure that all Civic Societies are treated as statutory consultees in the planning process, and our collective voice is heard when and where it needs to be heard.

Civic Voice has just relaunched its website with the tagline “Making Places Better”. <https://civicvoice.org.uk/> Already it is arranging more online workshops, seminars and discussions for member societies, and has negotiated free membership as well to the [National Council for Voluntary Organisations](https://www.nationalcouncilforvoluntaryorganisations.org.uk/) for member societies. It has also set up an expert panel that member societies can tap into.

Future plans include an online members forum, re-establishing and strengthening regional networking between civic societies, a relaunch of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies, and developing work to engage with the new regional mayors and authorities. In particular, they are keen to support member societies in engaging with younger people. This is essential work to ensure the survival of the civic movement.

For our own society we are looking for committee members who can assist with the following:-

- Someone to help in planning and publicising future events for members and non-members alike;
- Someone who can help us with publicity and press engagement;
- Someone who can support us with fundraising;
- Someone to help us update our website;
- Someone with an interest in trees;
- Someone who can help us to promote the Society and engage with the diverse communities in the town and encourage them to be part of our journey.

Or indeed anyone with a particular interest in any aspect of the local built environment or in our ongoing concerns and projects. Contact details on last page.

In March Pontefract Civic Society was awarded the King’s Award for Voluntary Service. The award is equivalent to an MBE for volunteer organisations. When you look at their website, you can see why.

<https://www.pontefractcivicsociety.org.uk/> They have working groups for planning, heritage, highways, rail, business, talks & tours, citizenship and even have a Junior Civic Society. The population of Pontefract in the 2011 census was 30,881. Spalding’s was 30,556. Both are market towns. If Pontefract Civic Society is able to do so much good in a town with a population comparable to Spalding’s, why can’t we do it in Spalding?

If seeing the work of Pontefract Civic Society has inspired you to want the same in Spalding, please step forward **John Bland**.

FLOWER PARADE

a marshal reflects

FIRST AND FOREMOST I'd like to thank the Spalding Flower Parade committee for organising this year's Flower Parade.

I volunteered to act as a marshal in the town centre and received plenty of feedback on the day which could help to make next year's event even better. With the Parade being based at Springfields, I found myself fielding a lot of questions about what time the parade would arrive, and about buses to Springfields, as well as requests for programmes. There was no-one selling programmes in the town centre. This seems like a missed opportunity. Some kind of parade information point in the town centre would, I feel, be helpful for visitors and would also be a way of promoting the town in general. I will be raising this with the Parade Committee and explore with them ways in which this might be resolved.

I did also hear a lot of comments about the lack of seating in Hall Place. That is of course not down to the Flower Parade Committee, but I hate to say it to those who approved the final plans for removing the seating circle in Hall Place, that we told you so, but.....

Like many, I would love to see the Parade back at the Halley Stewart Playing Field. Whilst that will not be possible for next year, can we have a conversation about 2027?

1967 is also the 60th anniversary of Barbecue'67, which was held in Winfrey Avenue. It was Sir Richard Winfrey who arranged for the Halley Stewart Playing Field to be donated to the town, and it was Sir Richard Winfrey who championed the Flower Parade in its early days. Indeed, in 1963 he



John Bland

said that it was always a personal thrill to think that the Parade set off from an avenue named after his late grandfather and ended in a field which bore the name of a great friend of his family, the late Sir Halley Stewart, the district's MP.

The Parade's rightful home is in the Halley Stewart Field. It needs to return there so that town centre businesses can benefit from it. Is it not also possible to explore a trades fair to coincide with the Parade, to enable our horticultural sector to promote themselves?. This was part and parcel of the Parade in its early days.

One way of securing the future of the Parade would be for it to be nominated as one of our national cultural traditions in the same way as Notting Hill Carnival is considered to be. [Nominations](#) will be open shortly, following the ratification of the 2003 [UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage last year](#). If Spalding Flower Parade was recognised as part of the nation's cultural heritage, it would surely unlock the door to government funding and commercial sponsorship

John Bland.

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

[] I am a tax payer and I wish to Gift Aid my annual subscription . Please send me the appropriate form.

AGM

IT WAS A PLEASURE to see the good turn-out of both members and non-members at the AGM, on 8 April at the Baptist Church in Swan Street.

The Chairman's Report welcomed various positive developments in the town during the past year. These included the BID Company's setting up, enabling the town's shops and businesses to act together for its betterment, and the completion of the Spalding Reconnected Project, with its riverside wildflower planting and town centre way-finding signs. Also of course the addition of livestock sculptures to the Society's MARK-IT Trail. The Town Board, however, set up to administer the £20m left-behind-town grant, has had to pause for a rethink, following the new government's revision of its objectives. Finally, there was a look ahead to the forthcoming local government changes, which will almost certainly mean Spalding having a town council again,

The Planning Report focused on the Council's welcome decision to prepare a long-needed shop-front design guide and the amended planning application for the Bull and Monkie site. The 4-storey, pretend-Georgian care home proposed, however, remains grossly obtrusive and destroys the character of this key site in the conservation area.

The Projects and Campaigns Report warned of the need for regeneration works to be thought through in accordance with an overall vision for the town centre and not done piecemeal like the unsatisfactory Hall Place changes; and celebrated the progress of the Society's MARK-IT public art trail..

After the approval of the accounts and re-election of officers, guest speaker Graham Soult gave a

thought-provoking presentation on *Reinventing Spalding Together*. He began by saying that Spalding is already starting to do the right things to deliver a successful High Street in the future – instancing the new way-finding signs, a growing number of town centre events, the MARK-IT Trail and an increasing collaboration and networking between different organisations.

We can't hope to compete with Springfields, but celebrating what we have that is already good motivates those businesses to become even better and work together. There is no doubt that online and offline messaging shapes perceptions of places and their potential for both investment and visits. Place-leaders (i.e. councils, community groups, civic societies, etc.) can celebrate and amplify the positive, while encouraging businesses to do the same. Could the businesses of Red Lion Street, for example, come together to create a distinctive atmosphere and identity?

You hear it said that we don't want or need retail any more. What we do need is more interesting and distinctive retail. Post-Covid, more consumers are arguably rediscovering the value and pleasures of in-person experiences. Together, all of us have a part to play championing what is good and challenging the "death of the high street" narrative, to help foster even better places. After all, "no town has been improved by people saying how rubbish it is!"

[A copy of the presentation is available to members. If any non-members who attended the AGM would like a copy, please contact the Society. New members joining the Society over the next year will also receive a copy.]

HOW MANY MILES TO LONDON?

100, it says – if you can read it. For years now people have remarked that the mile marker on London Road near High Bridge needs a lick of paint.

The Chairman has been able to secure agreement with LCC Highways Manager Kyra Nettle to get it fully restored later this year. One can't say when exactly, as potential permissions need resolving due to its location, but it will be done. There will then be discussions with the Highways Manager about "keeping an eye" on it in future.

There may well be other mile markers in the Spalding area that need attention. If so, please let the Chairman know by [email](mailto:info@spaldingsociety.org).



SATURDAY, 15 MARCH 2025 – AND AFTER

The MARK-IT Trail

AFTER THE EXCAVATING, the foundations, the clutter removal and repaving, the flat-bed journey from Leicestershire, the aerial transfers, and the installation, the day of the unveilings had arrived

In the final week, thanks to a Council magic wand and hard work from contractors beyond the call of duty, previous niggling obstructions just melted away. The last-minute possibility of disruption by vegan activists did not materialise and all went smoothly.

The notables and the 100-odd crowd mingled in happy anticipation, the sun shone, the Spalding Folk Club played, the speeches were made and Sir John Hayes and Katherine Bettinson, Vice-President of the Lincoln Red Cattle Society, unveiled the sheep and cattle to spontaneous count-downs. Livestock had returned to the town centre.

When they got close to them, it was remarkable how nearly everyone stroked or touched the cattle. One small boy sat on the ground between them and looked up in wonder at their heads.

Back at the Pied Calf, the youngsters' delight amidst the flock was a joy to see. Later, an elderly man could be seen stooped over one of the sheep, fingers intently exploring the rough fleece and smooth muzzle – seeing fingers, for the man was blind. Later still, a little girl broke from her mum and ran to the nearest sheep. “Wow!” she called, patting its head, then on to another. “Wow!” again and again until they'd all been patted. And, as the event wound down, the Transported team paused from dismantling their gazebo for a group photo on and amongst the Longwools. All told, it was “a joyous occasion”, said a visitor from Yorkshire.



Graham Boor



Brita Green r

A month after the unveiling the Flower Parade brought in crowds of visitors. Late morning I sat under The Pied Calf tree for an hour and watched. The sheep were popular. Five adults posed for photos standing by or seated on them; ten children, all sitting. And 64 other people interacted with the sculptures in some way – photographing the whole flock, pausing and talking about them, patting, resting a shopping bag, sitting, stroking them as they passed No-one seemed to be slamming the Council.

John Charlesworth



Graham Boor

Not that you'd have known it from the national press, where a few days later the “joyous occasion” had become a taxpayers' money diatribe. “Town has beef” with “cow statues,” said the *Telegraph*; “fury” said the *Mail*; while the *Express* had “Locals slam council [over] papier mache” statues.

“You shouldn't believe everything you read in the press,” it's said – especially if the source is half-a-dozen comments picked out of *Facebook*. Then taken up by a press agency and fed to other journalists, who, remote from the actual event, were ready to twist it to meet their paper's pre-determined agenda.

The Chairman got the *Express* to apologise for its papier mâché nonsense and other misinformation, rewrite its article and include his rebuttal in full. The fact is that grants from the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund must be spent only on a) People and Skills, b) Supporting Local Businesses and c) Local Communities and Places, the last including “tourism, culture and the arts”. Shared Prosperity money simply cannot go on hospitals, schools or “crumbling roads and potholes.”





D.I.Y.

The MARK-IT project is a celebration of Spalding's historic markets through a range of public



All photos © Nick Jones

art works, most recently Graeme Mitchelson's beautifully crafted stone sheep and cattle, but it is also an opportunity to benefit from Graeme's expertise and experience in a programme of stone-carving workshops, organised by Transported under the Arts Council's "Creative People and Places" scheme. Hence the four workshops arranged for late May.

Faced with a foot-square block of limestone – smooth and blank – how do you start? How liberate the hidden Michelangelo or inner Barbara Hepworth? (*When disaster is always just a chisel-slip away!*)

Graeme had some designs on paper – simple or more intricate – that could be transferred, carbon-copy-like, to the smooth face of the stone. Ready to chip away, under Graeme's guidance in the basic techniques, into a three-dimensional relief, such as one might find in the porch of a mediaeval church out in the fens.

The stone is soft, easily worked, with hand-pressure sufficient for detail and smoothing. On the dusty picnic tables two dimensions will hesitate into three as the morning progresses and the sun shifts round.

One lady, however, emerging from lunch into the sunlight fierce on her morning's handiwork, looked disappointed. "It's rubbish," she said. "It's just flat." Until Graeme set the block on its edge, angled it to the sun, and the flower she'd carved sprang into light and shadow. She was really chuffed, and keen to take it home and set it up in the garden – somewhere where the sun would catch it, of course.

28 people took part, including some members of the Boston Wood Carvers (also supported by Transported), keen to try the new material and to learn new techniques. The finished art works have taken everybody by surprise, for their quality and the speed of learning. So much so that a further 10 workshops have been organised, to allow for more people to take part and others to develop their skills further.

	Wed.	Fri.
June	25	27
July	2	4
	9	11
	16	18
August		1
	6	

Each workshop runs from **10am to 3pm**, with a short break for lunch about **12.30pm**.

Place: **Tonic 44 Community Hub, 44 Station Road, Surfleet, PE12 4DA.**

(From Spalding on the B1356, turn right at Surfleet church. 44 Station Road is about 300-400 yards along on the left.)

The **workshops are free. Paid lunch** in canteen or **bring own sandwiches.**

You may sign up for one or more workshops – first come, first served.

You must, however, **book a place** on the workshop(s) you would like to attend,

by e-mailing **Adam Fleming**

at transported@lincoln.ac.uk or phoning **07771 363 889** with your chosen date(s).

And please mention that you are from the Civic Society.



From Transported's and Arts Council England's point of view, the legacy from this project couldn't have been better. Our remit is to get more people involved in art. The popularity of the original four sessions saw more people wanting to get involved in extra workshops, hence the above opportunities. From Day One we were talking to them about establishing an independent Stone Carving Group that can go on to work together to take on their own projects,



creating new public art works that make the area nicer and more interesting. Graeme has been great, teaching and mentoring those taking part but also inspiring them to want to carry on and do more. Good carving!

Nick Jones.

As the local press reported nothing said at the event, for the record the Chairman outlined the history of livestock marketing in Spalding; Sir John Hayes as below; Katherine Bettinson spoke about the Lincoln Red Breed; and the sculptor set doubts at rest by saying it was perfectly OK to sit on the sculptures if one wanted.



All photos © Transported Art



WHY IT MATTERS

“AS TODAY we mark a notable day in our town, I am mindful that – personally and collectively – we are what we remember.

Through the emblems of remembrance, the sights and sounds of bygone days are brought to life.

Here in Spalding, from the settlement’s beginning, goods have been brought to market to be bought and sold. So it was with livestock, traded in the streets in which we walk today for centuries until 1938. Then the covered dedicated live-stock market was built, which continued until 1992, when Chris Longstaff tells me he sold the last beast there.

Today, through public art we reference that history and by doing so affirm the sense of place from which each of us derives a particular sense of identity and the feelings of worth it spawns.

Domestically, the art with which we surround ourselves in our homes is chosen personally, but public art is obligatory, as all of us are compelled to view it during everyday life.

It is for this reason that public art matters; for, once established, it becomes unavoidable, and thus compulsory. Seen day in day out in the place we call home, it colours the shared environment we all enjoy.

So. I congratulate the Civic Society on this initiative – because public art which is redolent of local history matters most of all.”

John Hayes



SOCIETY NOTES

Officers and Committee for 2025-6:- Chairman, **John Bland**; Secretary, **Marian Boxall**; Treasurer, **Melvyn Price**; Committee: **Howard Baxter** (Planning), **John Charlesworth** (Projects & Campaigns), **David Jones**, **Graham Boor**, **Val Gemmel**. Please don’t hesitate to contact any of the above with concerns about the local built environment or ideas for its enhancement.

Congratulations to the Chairman, who has been invited to join the [Institute of Place Management](#) as an Associate Member. This will enable him to build connections with trusted and respected academics, practitioners and policy makers involved in the management of place.

PLANNING MATTERS

IN MY LAST REPORT, I expressed our disappointment that there has not been any encouragement by the Planning Authority to persuade the applicant for the care home proposed for the Bull & Monkie site to engage directly with ourselves and the wider community. As there's still been no attempt to proactively engage with the Society, we have now lodged our formal objection to the amended plans.

At four storeys it is a monstrous domineering structure that will destroy the character of this key historic part of the conservation area. It's not just a matter of its incongruous size, dominating attention from all the obvious viewpoints – Welland Terrace, Bedford Place, Bridge Street, Double Street, High Bridge, High Street, Churchgate, Haverfield Road Footbridge – but its effect on the skyline from less obvious viewpoints, too. Sometimes it may be a glimpse between buildings, but at others intrusively over-topping trees or revealed through them in winter. For example, from Holland Road Carpark, Bath Lane, Church Street, The White Horse Carpark. (Site photographs on our website at www.spaldingcivicsociety.com.uk) To make matters worse, the guidebooks often describe the centre of Spalding as a Georgian town. To put a massive pretend-Georgian building, therefore – and a poor pretence at that – in the middle of a large group of genuine Georgian buildings, nearly all of them listed, would make a mockery of the description and suggest the town doesn't much care about its heritage.

As part of our objection, we have highlighted that there is now an alternative, sustainable, use for the Bull & Monkie site. The existing building is a similar size to Sleaford Town Hall – see photograph at <https://www.sleaford.gov.uk/gallery/1244075> In our last newsletter, I broached the idea of using the Bull & Monkie as a Town Hall for the Town Council that Spalding will need to have. The site could be compulsorily purchased by the District Council for the new Town Council. There are specific powers within the legislation to enable them to do this.

I also suggested that this could be part of a wider scheme involving the Barclays Bank building and the Council Offices that are likely to become redundant when the District Council is abolished as part of local government reform that will create a single unitary authority, which will almost certainly not be based in Spalding, but which will nevertheless require some presence in the town.

The Priory Road Council Offices would make an ideal care home, retirement village or affordable accommodation. It has more than enough car parking for a start. The value of the Council Offices must be in the millions. Far greater than the Bull & Monkie and Barclays Bank building combined. Whilst I am not a valuer, our proposal could make the Council a lot of money. Money that could then be reinvested in Spalding. Local Government Reform may not be happening this year, but it is not far off. Now that there is an application to turn the empty Barclays Bank building into a betting shop, which will be a considerable detriment to the town, I feel that our proposal must be explored to determine whether it is viable.

All the planning committee need to do is to defer, or preferably refuse, both the planning applications for the Bull & Monkie and Barclays Bank sites. That is all. Do they want to go down in history as the council that allowed the vantage points of the church from various parts of the town to be lost and the character of one of the most distinctive parts of its conservation area be destroyed when there is a potentially viable alternative, sustainable, option on the table? We hope not.

Deferral or refusal would allow the time for our proposal to be explored. If it has the potential to make a profit, then it is something that the District Council, either alone or in partnership with the Neighbourhood Board, could fund.

Turning to other applications, as reported by the press, the application for a loft conversion to Monk's House, including a dormer window, has been refused. Not only did we object, but Historic England and the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings also objected. A fresh application that includes conservation roof-lights has been lodged, which we will review and comment on.

We have also objected to the application by the Sessions House to remove the tiered benching from the public gallery in the old courtroom. Historic England, The Victorian Society and Historic Buildings & Places have also commented adversely on the proposals. As it is rare for national statutory consultees to comment on planning matters in Spalding, we will be encouraging the Sessions House to withdraw the application.

This is likely to be my last planning report, as Howard Baxter, who is a retired architect, has volunteered to take on the role as planning officer. Howard has already represented the Society at pre-application discussions relating to the restoration works to the Lutyens War Memorial in Ayscoughfee Gardens currently being undertaken. I thank Howard for stepping forward.

John Bland



MUCH APPRECIATED

- The annual **Flower Festivals** convert many South Holland churches into floral art galleries, exhibiting in their own fleeting medium work as beautiful as that of any painter or sculptor. The basic forms may seem somewhat limited, however – spray, wreath, cascade, cushion – with the danger of repetition, year on year, church to church, so it was a transforming touch when someone thought of *themes*: a different theme each year at each church. For the arranger there is the challenge to

the imagination each year to find fresh shapes and „props“ to fit the theme, and the further challenge to keep a balance between the two. For the visitor there is the added interest of seeing how effectively the arrangers have interpreted the theme.

The theme this year at St. Mary’s, Whaplode, was “Books and Novels”. Children’s books were popular: *Winnie the Pooh*, *Jungle Book* and so on, and the more recent *Gruffalo* and *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*. There were two Beatrix Potters and two *Alice in Wonderland*s. Lewis Carroll provides such a glorious choice of possible “props” – white rabbit and cheshire cat, top hat and teapot, duchess and “drink me” bottle, playing cards and pepper pot – that there’s a risk of the flowers having to play second fiddle to the “props”. The ingenuity is often delightful. A small detail in the *Thomas the Tank Engine* arrangement deserved a prize: the wagons of flowers were coupled together by bits of ivy tendril. Not maybe the most beautiful display but perhaps the most effective fusion of flowers and theme was *War of the Roses*, a simple arrangement where two banks of roses confronted each other – one crimson, the other white – with the Crown of England, the prize of victory, on high between them (*above*). It was good to see arrangements from the children of Whaplode School, too.

- The new **floor coverings shop** at the corner of The Crescent and The Sheepmarket, not least for

knowing what shop windows are for, replacing the blanking vinyl of the previous illegal-goods mini-market.

- **LCC Highways** for resurfacing the riverside footpath by Albion Street.

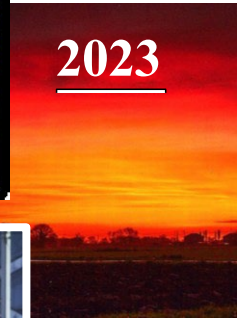
- **Celebrating River Day**. There must have been 40 or more craft making their way from the Yacht Club to the Moorings Inn on Sunday, 8 June (*below*). Mostly canoes and kayaks, but there were one or two paddle boards, a home-built raft, a cabined mini-edinghy, the Pirates of the Black Pearl (afloat rather than *on* a float, mast struck to get under the eight bridges), even a pedalo, and, bringing up the rear, a few mallard and a water taxi keeping a motherly eye on the flotilla in case anyone fell overboard. Few spectators could have had any idea that there were so many small craft round about Spalding – lurking in garages, lofts and sheds or covered with tarpaulins. So, congratulations to Councillor James Le Sage, who organised the event and thanks to Spalding Water Taxi and Welland Yacht Club, who helped to get everyone safely launched. An inaugural success, for what must surely now become an annual event.

- **Spalding Bid Ltd.** for funding 130 baskets throughout the town and **Pete Williams** for putting them up and watering them.

- **SHDC** for renovations in progress to the (listed) Lutyens War Memorial in Ayscoughfee Gardens.



CALENDAR 2026



We hope to produce a calendar for 2026 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.

Chairman: John Bland, 36 Park Avenue, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QX.

Secretary: Marian Boxall, 78a Edinburgh Drive, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2RT.

Treasurer: Melvyn Price, 3 Morus Close, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2QL.

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

Registered Charity Number 259956

01775 762150

01775 725293

01775 722908

01775 768303

Website www.spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk

