

SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November 2024

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

THIS NEWSLETTER is a bit later than we intended. We have been busy putting together our planning applications for the first two livestock sculptures in our MARK-IT Trail. It has taken a lot longer than I would have liked, so I can certainly see that some reform might help to speed up the planning process, which most developers argue is too slow. (See planning notes on p.4).

Another reason for the delay is that I wanted to wait for the Budget, when we would learn whether the £20m grant to Spalding, made under the 'Long Term Plan for Towns' introduced by the last Government, would be honoured or not. Well, it was – but kicked down the road, as the 'Long Term Plan' is to be re-formed and there will be a further period of consultation once the details are known.

I have mixed feelings about this. On the one hand there's already a basic plan for South Holland in place and many would like to get on with it. Equally, the local consultation was not as comprehensive as it could have been. A fresh consultation, drawing on the lessons learned in the summer, would ensure that a much wider range of opinions was obtained. This hopefully means that more opinions will be heard and considered. Moreover, one hopes that those who moan about money being wasted will engage in the process. This money has been awarded to the town and, whatever is decided, the residents of the town need to be happy with the decisions.

Speaking of consultations, what happens when people are consulted and that leads to changes in the design? What *should* happen, of course, is for the revised plans to be put out for a confirmatory consultation, just to make sure that there is support for the revised design. Not so in Spalding, it seems. The result is what we see happening in Hall Place and Red Lion Street at the moment. Many, many people are unhappy with the new designs. This includes Society members. If we had seen the revised plans for Hall Place and Red Lion Street, we would have given them a firm thumbs-down. I suspect that

many others would have done the same. There are questions to be answered. Why were the revised schemes not shared for opinions? Why are they so very different from the originals? Whilst we did not like the original designs, at least that for Hall Place had form and balance. Why have planters there been put on uneven ground? [Ed.: Now dealt with – See p.8.] Do we need that many? (Four in the original, not eight.) Why the random positioning? Why is the planting so unambitious for a town at the heart of a horticultural area? There will be more questions I am sure. We will be asking them.

When the £20m was announced, I suggested that these proposals for four different bits of the town be paused, so that some of the money could be used for a more ambitious scheme. It could have been so different. We could have been planning something as bold as the scheme below noted by committee member Graham Boor next to Lincoln's Cornhill Market. Hopefully, we can still see some real ambition in Spalding, and that the planters that have been installed will have a life as short as a pallet box that some people have likened them to.



Meanwhile, it was good to hear that Spalding Town Board will be funding new Christmas lights for the town. This is an example of the kind of difference the Board might be able to make in future. Another positive bit of news is that the Spalding BID should be up and running early next year. I hope all businesses will support it, whether the concept of a Business Improvement District appeals to them or not.

John Bland



OCTOPUMPKIN

IT HAD TO HAPPEN. After the sunshine of a St.Luke’s little summer for the last few years, this year’s Pumpkin Festival began grey and overcast, rained on us a bit at lunch-time and broke into sunshine once or twice in the afternoon. Not that it seemed to have put off the crowds that filled the town centre, any more than it had deterred the scores of stallholders packing the Sheepmarket (and the Magistrates Court forecourt). Charity stalls national and local (Moulton Mill). Trinkets galore, interspersed with local honey, fudge, gin. It was good to see Pacey’s among them for the first time, and the Flower Parade team had a massed array of vases of vivid flowers.

Wandering entertainers are a special feature of any successful fair, so there were morris dancers, pantomime cast, balloon modellers, and stilt walkers. But more, please. Such as accordion players and other (unamplified) musicians? Jugglers? Acrobats? Unicyclist? Break dancers? Ordinary folk with unordinary skills, close up – could I do that? – and near enough for a chat.

It was a pity there were fewer traditional fair-ground attractions this time and therefore less opportunity to do and experience things that don’t normally come one’s way during the rest of the year. This is a key part of the expectation, the excitement. Witness the delight of youngsters tossing their armfuls of leaves in the Autumn Bubble or queuing to have their faces painted or crowding the pumpkin-decorating tables, where the Council’s Community Team provides free children-sized pumpkins and far more stickers, felt pens and other odds and ends for decorating them than will be found at home.

One of the highlights is always the display of

pumpkins carved previously by the local experts – some beautiful, some grotesque (the carvings, that is), others inventive and often witty. I wonder if master pumpkin-sculptor Jonathan Nicholls could be persuaded to let us see him actually at work. There was a young owl this year, for example, peering out from a pumpkin, as it were from its hole in a tree. Was the owl carved separately and then inserted into a hole carved in the pumpkin, or was it all of a piece?

Increasingly shops are joining in with autumn-dressed windows or forecourts. Flowers’n’Things, Bookmark, The Shoppe, Kittens Got Claws caught the eye particularly.

The Pumpkin Parade of seven or eight years ago was a rather dreary, lack-lustre affair. To have transformed it into the present popular family event is a real achievement. All praise and thanks to the Council’s Community Engagement Team. Long may it continue, and the fairground essence be strengthened further.

John Charlesworth

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**

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.....

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



With thanks to The Lincolnshire Longwool Sheep Breeders' Association and The Lincoln Red Cattle Society for photographs and information

THE RETURNERS

IT'S BEEN A LONG WAIT. But livestock should be back in the town centre again by the spring – see p.5 – in the next stage of the Society's MARK-IT project. And not just any old livestock either. Graeme Mitcheson's sheep and cattle sculptures will be particular to the Lincolnshire breeds that were auctioned weekly in the middle of the town in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their profiles follow.



Lincolnshire Longwools

The Lincolnshire Longwool is a British native – a cross between the Leicester and the coarse native sheep of Lincolnshire – and consequently the breed thrives in our climate. The largest of our native breeds, it is rather rectangular in shape, deep-bodied and wide, and with a head larger and bolder than in other long-wooled breeds.

Lincolns have been bred for both meat and wool. Their wool has always been of primary importance, with ewe fleeces weighing between 12 and 20 pounds (5.4 – 9 kg). Annual shearing is essential. The wool is coarse and somewhat hair-like and the heavy locks tend to twist into spirals towards their ends. The fleece is clear white and has a definite lustre. However, when cotton largely began to replace wool their numbers declined. It is now a heritage breed of great national importance.

They are thoroughly domesticated and, despite their size, very docile. They can easily be trained to come to the sound of a rattling feed bucket, making them easy to manoeuvre, without the need for a dog.

Lincoln ewes have strong maternal instincts and make good mothers. With easy lambing and milky

ewes they produce excellent lambs for the market and fit well into a more sustainable way of farming.



Lincoln Reds

The Lincoln Red emerged from cross breeding in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and was subsequently bred as a dual beef and milk animal.

The Lincoln Red is reasonably large-framed, with a strong, broad muzzle, well-placed legs and sturdy feet. They are a deep cherry red in colour. An early maturing breed, they require minimum care, are easy calvers and are not prone to sunburn or eye cancer.

They are feed-efficient, being good converters of forage and easily adaptable to regional grazing and climate conditions.

Their beef is marbled, flavourful and succulent.

Nevertheless, with the widespread importing of continental breeds in the 1970s and 1980s, Lincoln Reds, along with other indigenous British breeds, fell out of favour. The pendulum, however, has begun to swing back again. With the ever-increasing cost of imports, native breeds, with their feed efficiency off pasture, are returning to popularity again.



PLANNING MATTERS

THINGS have been fairly quiet on the planning front, possibly as developers wait to see what the new Government ministers meant when they talked about the relaxation of planning rules to speed up the planning process. More of the detail is now known, with some of the headlines affecting the rural countryside. For example, pylons. Relaxing the rules for onshore wind and solar energy, whilst using pylons for new power cables looks as if it may continue – without any evidence to assess whether *underground* cabling, either out to sea or inland, may ultimately be the better option. Whilst such proposals do not directly affect Spalding, they do affect South Holland quite considerably. Although the landscapes of significant areas of the UK's industrial heartlands still bear the scars of the industrial revolution, inflicted when our ancestors did not understand the harm to the environment that they were causing, we do now know better. The need to develop green energy is well understood, but to do it in a way that results in the industrialisation of a large area of countryside from the Humber to the Thames seems very short-sighted. As John Clare wrote: "All nature has a feeling."

Another change is the advocacy of 'National Model Design Codes' and local design codes, as hallmarks for assessing and improving the design of development, removing the need to agree on what might be considered to be beautiful. This change surely makes the need for local

design codes all the more important. Do we really want new housing to look identical, wherever it is in the country? With the proposal to increase funding for local planning authorities, and the reform of the Government's 'Long Term Plan for Towns', under which Spalding will still be receiving £20M, hopefully there will be some funds to develop a local design code for South Holland that reflects some of the Dutch influence found in many older properties in the area, or indeed found in Low Fulney. We do have a local identity in housing design – despite the faceless uniformity of too many of our post-war estates. Should we not be nurturing local design and developing it for the future?

There are other ways in which the planning process could be speeded up. One of the challenges we faced in developing our planning applications for the first two livestock sculptures in our MARK-IT Trail was the hurdle of getting maps showing the locations of the utilities. Whilst we were eventually able to obtain them – thanks to Lincolnshire County Council – surely this information should be made available to all local planning authorities, or indeed be obtainable from a single national source, so that anyone planning a development can obtain a single map of a site showing precisely where underground utilities are and their depth in the ground. This would remove a significant hurdle for any property developer, would it not?

John Bland

RAF SCAMPTON

IN THE JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER the Chairman voiced his concern about the then government's plan to house asylum seekers at RAF Scampton. "The proposals would scupper long-standing plans to develop a £300m heritage centre there that will help to tell the story of the Dambusters, who were based at Scampton. Plans that would give tourism in Lincolnshire a considerable boost."

In September 2024 the following appeared in the national press :-

Dambusters Base – housing plan scrapped

“RAF Scampton, the former home of the Dam-

busters, will not be used to house asylum seekers because the plan does not represent value for money, the Home Office has said..... Work to close it will begin immediately.....

“We have also listened to community feedback and concerns about using this site for asylum accommodation.”

“Forty historians including Antony Beevor, Max Hastings and Dan Snow have written to the Home Office saying plans to use the historic site, formerly home to 617 Squadron, as an asylum camp were an act of ‘cultural desecration’.”

[*The Guardian*, 6 September 2024 – shortened.]

MUCH APPRECIATED

SHDC for launching a consultation on dog fouling and acting on the results. Failure of anyone in charge of a dog to pick up its waste will incur an on-the-spot £100 fine, under the newly introduced Public Spaces Protection Order. Similarly for being without a poo-bag. A further provision will exclude dogs from enclosed children's play areas. As always, of course, effectiveness will depend on enforcement.

- The new owners of the **Magistrates Court** for the refurbishment of the royal coat of arms on the gates. Very much worth a pause when you're passing, to inspect the detailed skill of the painter's brushwork. The left pair of gates are the ones to look at, as the right gates are not yet completed.

- The growing number of shops supporting the Pumpkin Festival with autumn-dressed windows or forecourts. **Flowers'n'Things, Bookmark, The Shoppe** and **Kittens Got Claws** caught the eye particularly. And this increase is continuing as Christmas themes take over.

- SHDC for repairs and refurbishments to the Lutyens War Memorial in Ayscoughfee Gardens (listed).

but

- SHDC for their now more active approach to graffiti removal *but* what about those directly opposite the Council Offices in the porch of the old Johnson Hospital?

- The new **mini-market in the Sheepmarket** for using their shop window as a shop window to display actual goods *but* why then spoil things with panels of the usual gross mini-market vinyls of fruit and veg and sausages at the side ?

- **LCC Highways** for removing the obtrusive green eyesore of a 'car'-cycle-rack in the Sheepmarket *but* the replacement racks are so flimsily installed – simply bolted directly into the tarmac – that they were leaning sideways and the bolts coming loose in less than a week. How long before one is pushed over entirely?



The MARK-IT Trail

SHEEP IN PROGRESS

Anti-clockwise from top left:

**Limestone blocks delivered to
Graeme Mitcheson's studio workshop**

The head begins to emerge, the fleece too

**Longwool by name, long wool by nature
and the sculptor's hand**

Photographs copyright Graeme Mitcheson



STENINGESKOLAN

“For homework I want you to write about something you did in the holidays.”

I WAS BOWLED OVER in the summer. Not by a pedestrian-area car or a cyclist speeding the wrong way up the Crescent without lights – but by a primary school.

Built two or three years ago, in southern Sweden, on the west coast, it is set well back



on a gently sloping site,

and looks across the coast road and a stretch of rocks and juniper to the sea. Its architecture is clean-lined, modern; its details a model of thoughtful design. The canteen, for example, has French doors that open directly onto a terrace with picnic tables, so pupils can eat their sandwiches outside when it's warm and sunny. The fire-escape (*left*) is not the usual zigzag of an after-thought but an encased spiral feature integral to the architecture. The low cycle rack is set against a row of shrubs and therefore unobtrusive. The pupils' lobby area has the usual coat-pegs, but also two upright prongs on the floor below each – to take up-ended wellies on wet or snowy days and prevent them getting kicked about accidentally and mixed up.

I was a bit puzzled at first by the dark exterior treatment, but maybe it's to save energy, absorbing the sun's warmth rather than reflecting it.

The large school-yard or playground (*right*) is behind the building, and has plenty of space for tiggly or Batman or grandmother's footsteps, but also a wealth of equipment from the traditional to the unexpected. There are two sand-pits (one covered); swings, both the familiar public-park ones and the basin sort for reception toddlers; two football 'pitches', a small soft-surface one for the youngest learning the game and a larger grass one. A performance area has tiered audience steps cut out of a steeper part of the site. And there's a colourful abstract sculpture of some sort.

Recycled materials are put to new use. A length of railway rail raised about six inches off the ground becomes a 'tightrope'; halved motor tyres are fixed upright in the ground for a row of 'stepping stones'. Fun



The photo shows just about a third of the total playground area.

of course, and a challenge. But more than that – there’s discovering the physical skill of how to keep your balance. The fun and the learning are one.

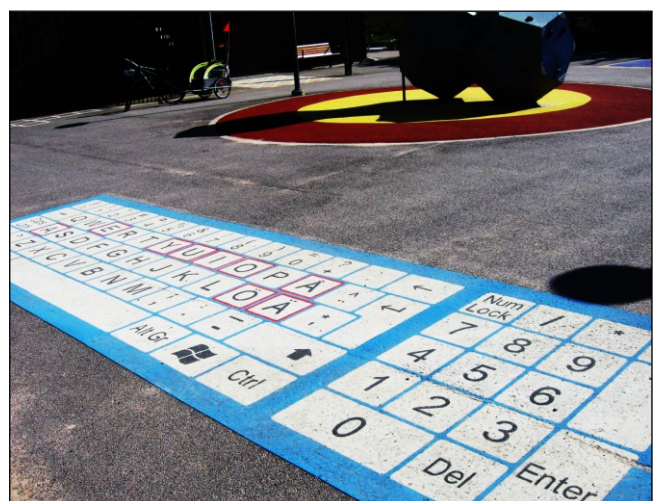
It’s the same with the playground markings. Some are simply fun, like the hop-scotch grid; others combine fun and learning as above. The most obvious of these is probably the mini road layout, with roundabout and junctions, and parking bays alongside a small building, no doubt containing pedal cars as well as footballs, skipping ropes and bean bags. Less obvious are the zoomed-up, child-sized ‘boards’ – i.e. with squares each big enough for a child to stand in – such as snakes-and-ladders (counting?), a large numerical grid (multiplication tables?) and, surprising and right, a giant computer keyboard (*right*). Perceived as games, the teaching of the classroom is reinforced in the fun of the schoolyard.



the sheer size of the site, the evident calibre of the architects employed and the breath-taking amount and variety of the playground equipment – for just 50 pupils. In short, the abundant resources allocated to education. Other societies, other priorities, perhaps.

I wished I could have been shown round inside the school, but it was the summer holidays. So how did I manage to see so much? I’d just walked into the yard. There was a fence, yes, but not an 8-foot metal palisade with spiked tops and locked gates of the kind we have become used to here. No intercom with disembodied voice asking for your credentials. No sign of a caretaker or site manager. I don’t know if the gates are locked at night.

Sunday morning, and a young lad learning to ride his bicycle (*see playground photo on previous page*) in the safe space of the playground, a dad pushing



And the abstract art-work? A climbing sculpture. The kids will invent their own challenges: “Bet you can’t get to the top just on the dark blue bits.” Agility, close scrutiny, working out the possible moves ahead Teachers and architects must have worked closely together.

It’s not a private school for the children of parents with deep pockets. Steningskolan is a state school. For the 50 - 60 children of Steninge, aged 6 to 11.

It’s not for a moment to suggest that first- school playgrounds in this country today are unchanged from the bare asphalt yards I remember from my schooldays. Of course there are playground markings now (cricket stumps on a wall?), climbing frames, small vegetable patches, and so on. But it’s

his toddler in one of the ‘basin’ swings, some parents chatting Not just a school playground, but a community space..... Thursday afternoon, and a couple of older boys (aged 10 maybe) clambering about on a frame, a little girl and her mother playing a cross between football and beach volley-ball on a sanded area; and I plucked up courage to be nosy – and discover the giant keyboard and the balancing rail and (peering through a window) the wellie prongs

The open access was astonishing. To many primary teachers in this country it would seem like a dream come true, except except exceptperhaps maybemaybe there might have been a bit more green space where kids could simply run about and let off steam.

John Charlesworth

“Few Britons know the language of architecture. At school, they are taught literature, music and painting – arts they can enjoy in private. Yet architecture is an art gallery from which there is no escape. It is everywhere around us.However, its styles, forms and features are still untaught.”

Simon Jenkins (*The Guardian*, 28 October 2024.)



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2025

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£5.50

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CALENDAR



The 2025 calendar might almost have been called "South Holland in Bloom", with pictures ranging from Whaplode's snowdrops to the Nat-West flower baskets by way of Baytree and Ayscoughfee Gardens. Thirteen beautiful photographs of Spalding and round about, some expected, some not. Interesting captions, too, and **large format for appointments, birthdays and reminders**. On sale to the public at Bookmark, Spalding News and Ayscoughfee Hall Museum, but members' special discount price of £5.50 available **only direct from the Society**. Free delivery locally. Otherwise add £2.50 per calendar for postage and packing. Would make ideal Christmas present.

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

Please send me calendars at £5.50/£8.00 each. I enclose a cheque for £, made out to **Spalding and District Civic Society.**

Name Address

Tel. Email

STOP PRESS

Lopsided planters moved

We contacted Coun. Gary Taylor re the unlevel planters outside Boot's, and he undertook to deal with the matter forthwith. He did, and a few days later the planters had been moved to level ground. Much appreciated. The new Hall Place street furniture has begun to have some shape and look a bit less like a handful of Lego bricks dropped on the floor.

AGM

18 March 2025

For the diary

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

