

# SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October 2013

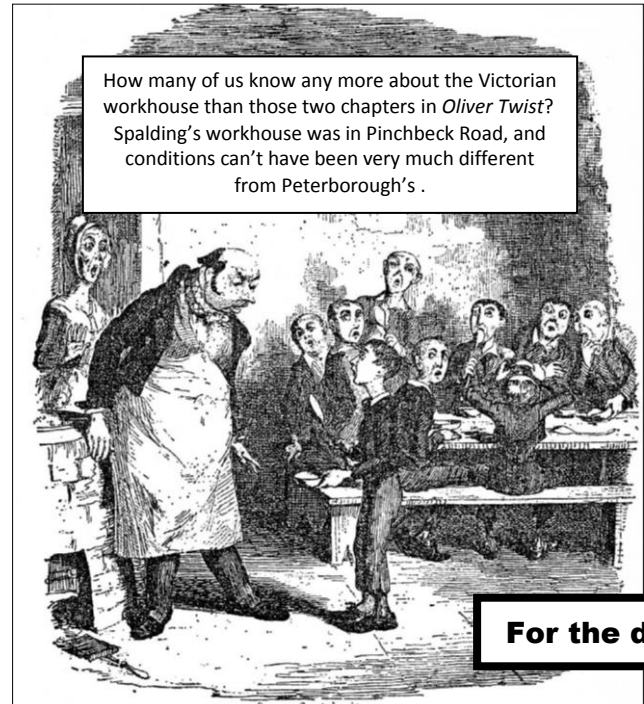
## LOCALISM OR TOKENISM ?

POWERS for local communities to shape for themselves the place in which they live: that's the message that has gone forth about the Localism Act (2011). What's not to like? Amongst the opportunities it offers to local communities are :-

- the right to bring forward modest development schemes (Community Right to Build) – as is happening with the small Flaxmill project at Pinchbeck;
- the right to bid to take over the running of a public service (Community Right to Challenge);
- the right to get a building or piece of land, whether publicly or privately owned, listed as a “community asset” (Community Right to Bid). This means that, should it later come up for sale, there will be a six months delay during which the community group has the chance to get together the funds to bid for the listed asset on the open market – as with the present project to buy the Dun Cow at Cowbit for the community.
- The Act also empowers a public body to hand over the management or ownership of land or buildings to a community group at less than market value (Community Asset Transfer).

Fine, but clearly the power of communities to shape for themselves the place where they live also comes with a price tag, literally. The community group has to be able to raise the money or secure the funding to build, buy or run whatever it is.

And what exactly is a “community group”? It includes parish councils, charities, “unconstituted community groups of at least 21 members” living locally ..... Now, whilst parish councils have the statutory power to raise money through tax (the parish precept), it will be rather more difficult for other community groups to find the required means.



### THE PETERBOROUGH WORKHOUSES

an illustrated talk by  
**STEPHEN PERRY**

Thurs. 17 October, 7.30, Grammar School Business Centre

In short, whilst the Act at first sight offers the tempting prospect of people being able to own their future through being able to control the sort of development they want in their neighbourhood, in practice it comes hedged about with financial constraints. (*See also p.3.*)

Spalding of course has no parish or town council, able to initiate the types of project possible under the Act. Personally, I hope to see the day when Spalding has a vibrant, active town council able to make use of some of the powers granted by the Localism Act. It is an opportunity but, like all such, needs commitment and enthusiasm to deliver the vision.

**Robert West** (Chairman)

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## PLANNING MATTERS

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**T**HE BIDS short-listed for some of the £265,282 of S106 money for town centre regeneration projects have confirmed our worst fears. Disparate and some of them barely relevant, they will, if approved, make virtually no perceptible difference to the town centre.

Although a joint Civic Society and Chamber of Commerce bid had been envisaged, in the event the Chamber decided to go it alone. Basically their bid was to fund a Town Centre Manager. The Society certainly supports this in principle, as we have been urging the reappointment of a Town Centre Manager on the Council since at least 2008.

However, there are some aspects of the Chamber's submission we cannot support – most notably un-doing the daytime pedestrianisation of the town centre (*see p.8*), even if only for the Into Town bus service. Yes, there ought to be a bus-stop really close to the centre. The obvious place, though, surely is the lay-by between the Pied Calf and the Prior's Oven, which would not affect the pedestrianisation.

### **Wygate Park**

After sitting on the site for 12 years, Allison Homes (Eastern) have at last submitted proposals for a housing estate of 286 'units'. Its centre is already designated for a new primary school and area of public green space. But instead of using this as the basis to create a real sense of place with as distinctive and attractive a character as, say, the green in the centre of Donington, it goes for nothing, ignored by a maze of meandering roads and dead-ends crammed with monotonous sub-Edwardian boxes. Utterly depressing.

### **Affordable Homes**

As part of its application Allison Homes (Eastern) has climbed on what is now a national band-wagon, and is seeking the removal of its obligation for a third of the houses to be 'affordable', claiming that this would make the development 'unviable'. The crying need at the moment, in South Holland as

much as nationally, is for 'affordable homes'. If developers are not held to this obligation, then how else are the affordable homes to be provided?

### **Sports Fields**

Spalding Rugby Club is looking to move from its long-established home on the Grammar School's fields, partly as a result of the School's increasing demands on its fields and partly as a result of needs arising from the growing success of the Club's own junior rugby programme. The chosen site is in open countryside on Drain Bank South. Unfortunately, this is well outside the development boundaries of both Spalding and Cowbit and accessible only by car for players and spectators alike, and therefore contrary to all relevant planning policies.

At the same time Spalding United Football Club was reported a year ago to have a lease on a new edge-of-town site and, although this now seems to have faded from view, the Football Club may have to move anyway if the Charity Commissioners rule that the Halley Stewart Field must be restored to full public use as set out in the trust deed. (*Below.*)

Meanwhile, the planning officers are at work allocating land use for the next 15 years or so for the new local plan. (*See p.4.*) Much as one sympathises with the two clubs, ought they not to be putting their heads together with the planning officers to evolve some sort of coherent scheme to accommodate their respective needs, rather than proceeding piecemeal?

### **Railway Station**

Plans have been approved to convert a disused part of the station into two flats, which will provide welcome after-hours surveillance of this listed building. The stringent conditions imposed should ensure the preservation of historic internal features. It would be ideal if the future tenants were railway enthusiasts, keen to see the station smart and well-kept.

### **Planning Sub-Committee**

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## THE SIR HALLEY STEWART SPORT-SPECIFIC SITE (?)

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TO RECAP .....The Field was given to be used "in perpetuity as a playing field for the benefit of the inhabitants" of Spalding (Trust Deed). In operating a locked gate policy for many years, giving Spalding United Football Club virtually exclusive use of the Field, the Council (as Trustees) would seem to have been in clear breach of the Trust Deed. Accordingly,

the Charity Commission has now instructed the Council "to review the way in which the Playing Field is currently managed, with a view to re-establishing clear public benefit in the way it is operated" (8 April). Now read on.

Instead, however, the Council are trying to justify their management. As follows:- [Page 4 ►



# NO MUST MEAN NO

when local people object to wind turbines

I WAS DELIGHTED to play a part in bringing about the Government’s recent changes to planning guidance which will help to stop wind turbines where they are not wanted.

If people don’t want to have industrial turbines near their home, they shouldn’t be forced into having them. These changes mean that communities will no longer feel ignored or bullied into having wind turbines against their wishes.

This is great news for campaigners in South Holland. Planning inspectors will now have to take into account the number of turbines already in an area and the impact they have on the landscape, with a particular emphasis on topography – which is especially damaging in the flat, uninterrupted countryside of the Fens. After all, it’s big skies, not tall industrial structures, which are our area’s defining characteristic.

The new guidance applies to all current and future applications for turbines, so campaigners can feel confident that their voice will be heard. It is outrageous, when local people and their councillors have objected to wind turbines, that – up until now – developers have been able to successfully appeal and overturn local opposition. In future, when local people say no, it will carry more weight.

I have campaigned against inappropriately-sited wind farms in our area for all the time I’ve been the local MP, and so I was determined to play my part in bringing about these changes. The wishes of local communities will no longer be automatically overridden by national renewable energy targets or powerful developers.

**John Hayes**

*John Hayes is MP for South Holland and the Deepings and Minister Without Portfolio. He is also a member of the Society.*

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

**I**T IS A DIFFERENT PICTURE, however, with other infra-structure installations. In August Nick Boles, fellow Lincolnshire MP and Minister for Planning, announced that “planning permission for a wide range of industrial and commercial developments, including factories, warehouses, quarries and hotels, would in future be decided at national, not local level”.

If local people don’t want *these* developments near their homes, then tough. They will be forced to have them willy-nilly if the government says so. There really does seem to be a serious inconsistency in the government’s position. People are bound to ask: if communities can say no to a wind farm, why can’t they say no to HS2 or fracking wells or a waste-burning power station? But according to Mr.Boles, not even the local planning authority will be allowed to say no now, never mind ordinary local people.

### FRACKING

FRACKING may seem comfortably remote. It’s what is happening up near Blackpool, isn’t it, or being threatened in the Trough of Bowland and in West Sussex? But it may not be too long before it’s on our doorstep, too.

**Much of the Midlands, including South Holland, is under consideration for licensing.**

The Prime Minister is an enthusiastic supporter and George Osborne has announced a large tax break for the fracking industry (30% tax rate compared with 62% and 81% for North Sea operations), along with £100,000 “compensation” for any community allowing fracking in its area.

Not everybody can be bought, however, as the protesters at Balcombe in West Sussex have been making clear.

Hydraulic fracturing, to give it its proper name, is the practice of blasting dense shale rocks with water, sand and chemicals at high pressure to release tiny bubbles of natural gas trapped within.

Supporters promise cheaper energy bills, but in the US the process has been associated with leaks of methane (a global-warming gas very much worse than CO<sub>2</sub>), with air and water pollution, and with the exhaustion of water supplies; and, in this country, with two small earthquakes near Blackpool. There is also the problem of disposing of vast volumes of contaminated water safely. (Further information at [www.foe.co.uk/stopfracking](http://www.foe.co.uk/stopfracking) )



A Cuadrilla drilling rig near Blackpool



## THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

WHAT WILL SPALDING look like in 2031? The first draft of the *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan* (cover detail above), which will determine the future shape of our towns, villages and countryside, was put out for consultation in May. It covers South Holland and Boston Borough.

There is much to welcome in this all-important document. For example, policies to promote and enhance town centres; to conserve historic buildings, monuments and landscapes; to minimise the need to travel; to protect bio-diversity and avoid the fragmentation of habitats; to vary housing densities to reflect the nature of particular sites; and so on.

Other proposals, however, we find it difficult to accept. For example, a huge estate of 3750 houses north of the Vernatt's; a division into flood risk zones that explicitly ignores "the presence of defences" (in what is arguably one of the best defended areas for flood risk in the whole country); the concept of "non-service villages", which will be precluded from any further houses or shops.

There are also astonishing gaps. Amongst the most serious are any policies:- to cover the housing problems created by the area's acknowledged 14,000 seasonal workers; to control advertising and signs, which can play such havoc with town centres and the

countryside if uncontrolled; or for allotments or the provision of green public space for informal leisure, affecting far more people than formal sports provision.

One of the worst consequences of the government's drastic reduction of planning guidance into the mere 52 pages of the *National Planning Policy Framework* is that so much has become vague or generalised, and therefore open to differing interpretations, legal wrangling and appeals. Therefore it is important that the new *local plans* retain their exactness and precision, so that everybody – councillors, officers, developers, members of the public – know just where they stand. In this respect the South East Lincolnshire draft plan is inconsistent. Whilst on the one hand it is so specific as, rightly, to protect the visual dominance of Boston Stump over the Boston skyline, on the other much greater guidance is needed on the design of new development.

The Society's response to the consultation ran to 12 sides of A4. We hope the revised version of the new local plan will take in some of our observations and positive suggestions.

### Planning Sub-Committee

◀ Page 2]

1. *As anyone can hire the Field if they want, it is open for public use.* Charity Commission response: The hire fees, however, and the "complicated and onerous" requirements for use mean that many groups and individuals "will not, in practice, have access to this Field particularly for informal recreation" (8 August).

2. *In operating the Field as a "sport specific site" or "dedicated sports facility/stadium" [as the Council have taken to calling it], we are providing the public benefit intended by the Trust Deed.* Charity Commission response: The object of the Trust, however, is to provide a **playing field** for the people of Spalding, not a **dedicated sports facility/stadium**, "if the result is in effect to exclude members of the public from access" (17 September). One suspects the Commission's patience may be

beginning to wear a bit thin. "Playing field" is a much more general term, of course, providing space for a whole range of informal activities, from kick-about to keepy-uppy, from tiggly to jogging or flying a kite.

Nor is fencing off the SUFC football pitch with an 8-foot fence, as was recently suggested within the Council, leaving just a strip for open public use, a solution. It was the whole field, not a third or a quarter of a field, that was given for the benefit of Spalding people.

The problem is real. How much longer before SHDC admits that its management of the Field has long been in breach of the Trust Deed? Only then will it be possible to get together round a table with representatives of, say, the general public, the Football Club and Sport England (or Fields in Trust) to work out an acceptable solution.



Spalding Railway Station about 1910 with boxes of flowers.  
(Note the number of staff.)

SPALDING RAILWAY STATION is just a shadow of its former self these days. Gone are the seven platforms served by steam and diesel engines; gone are the special trains thronged with visitors for the once-famous Flower Parade; gone is the network of sidings with freight vans brimming with local produce to be

delivered far and wide throughout the UK. The junctions of lines to Boston, Bourne, King's Lynn and March were ripped out years ago, leaving only memories. Signal boxes and out-buildings have been demolished, all in the name of progress. Despite all this, however, what remains of Spalding Railway Station today is firmly at the heart of the community, one of its main transport hubs and in regular daily use. And it has now been *adopted*.

Station adopters are a group of individuals determined to make a big difference to their local station. They become its eyes and ears, reporting faults and raising issues. They help to ensure the station is well presented and looked after. They work with and are supported by the local station management team, to the overall benefit of the station and its customers.

The work undertaken by station adopters usually includes:- gardening and landscaping, painting structures and fixtures to cover graffiti, litter picking, rubbish removal, general aesthetic improvements, and reporting vandalism and any property faults. We are only limited by our imaginations.

More particularly, what are we adopters up to at Spalding Railway Station? As a group we became the station adopters in March 2009. We knew the task before us was going to be tough, but we hadn't realised just how much effort would be required to change and improve a very run-down station and site.

We embarked on a programme of clearing the heavily overgrown areas of the station buildings and subsequently the platforms, carpark and old dock area. This clearance work took us almost three back-breaking years to achieve using mostly hand tools, with plenty of blisters, ointment and plasters along the way.

By now we had attracted the attention of the regular station users and, their curiosity aroused, we were inundated with feedback, both positive and negative, but most of all people wanted to know what our future plans for the station were.

Well, we have set ourselves a five-year plan to transform Spalding Station from its many years' dilapidation into somewhere much more appealing for those who use it.

Our intentions are:- (1) to remodel the station gardens, using flower boxes made by ourselves from recycled wooden pallets that we collect from various sources around the district. Many of these boxes can now be seen in the carpark, with more sited on both platforms.

(2) To dig out the old bay on Platform 2, which was filled in when British Rail removed the track donkey's years ago. Hopefully, we are going to get the necessary permissions to place a locomotive in this bay with a couple of wagons.

With the agreement of Network Rail's Community Rail Department, we have embarked on clearing vegetation from the disused platform that has lain forgotten and derelict for many years. To our delight we have uncovered the old flagstones covering a section of this platform, taking us back to a time before the 1930s. (3) We are now formulating a scheme to rebuild this disused platform, as, even though no longer used, it is still part of the station's Grade II listed status. The platform has endured decades of abuse, from trenches being dug through it to people removing bricks and other items for souvenirs – so a spot of TLC won't come amiss.

(4) As for the unused part of the footbridge, that is possibly up for re-instatement at some future point. It depends on how the County Council, South Holland District Council, Network Rail and East Midlands Trains negotiate about its future.

Our research on Spalding Station continues, with many offers of information and photographs provided by local rail enthusiasts and the public at large. We are still a long way from producing an accurate history of the station. However, if you have any information or old photographs of Spalding Railway Station, then please get in touch with us. Also we are always looking for plants and shrubs to fill the planters as we go, if you feel you would like to make a donation in the future.

In short, through our SSAG team we are aiming to create a station that the travelling customer and the whole community can be proud of. We want our station to provide a welcoming, clean and well-maintained environment, and as Station Adopters we feel sure we can achieve this. Our main sponsor is South Holland Radio CIC, whose help has been fantastic. So, come on now, and make a real difference by joining our station adoption team. It's great fun and an engaging way to get involved with the community, make new friends and take pride in our local station.

**Alan North**  
[Alan North is the Team Leader of Spalding Station Adoption Group. Contact details:- **Spalding Station Adoption Group, Broadcasting House, Spalding Railway Station, Station Approach, Spalding, Lincs., PE11 1EY. Tel. 01406 37315. E-mail admin@shradio.co.uk .]**



Sir Peter Hendy unveils the plaque to Frank Pick. *From the left:* Coun.Elizabeth Sneath, John Hayes (MP), Howard Johnston, Robert West and Sir Peter Hendy.

## PLAQUE UNVEILING

AFTER DAYS OF BLUSTERY RAIN the sun shone, Sir Peter Hendy (Commissioner for Transport for London) released the cord to unveil the plaque, and Spalding at long last recognised one of its most distinguished sons.

Sir Peter spoke of Frank Pick's organising genius that brought together "a mess of over 25 separate companies" into the fully co-ordinated organisation that was London Transport and extended its lines during the 20s and 30s out into the suburbs in all directions.

He was "the first person to realise the potential of modern marketing" and, with his passion for modern art, architecture and design, to understand their vital rôle in creating a recognisable, reliable 'brand' for London Transport and stimulating its use outside rush-hours. He commissioned sculpture from Jacob Epstein, posters from the foremost British artists of the day, the art deco suburban stations, the universally imitated Underground map, and the distinctive logo and type-face. Then, with the outbreak of war, he turned his organising skills to co-ordinating the mass evacuation of children from London. "An extraordinary man," said Sir Peter.

Howard Johnston spoke of his great pleasure in helping Spalding to realise just how distinguished a figure Frank Pick was in the country's design heritage.

And MP John Hayes welcomed the way the Civic Society was starting to make good the town's previous lack of public art and plaques, so important in "affirming our sense of place and identity".

Thanks then to Judy and Mike Chapman for research and seeing the project through via a series of mini-crises, to Howard Johnston for sponsoring the plaque, to the Halifax Building Society for their ready co-operation, and of course to Sir Peter for doing us the honour of unveiling the plaque on 15 June.

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Since one woke up to the birth and early years of Frank Pick here in Spalding, it is remarkable how often his name has been cropping up on television and in the national press. For example, a *Guardian* piece earlier this year on the Lyons' Corner Houses described him as "the first corporate patron to understand that presenting the consumer with high-end art could be mutually beneficial. When he commissioned artists such as Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland to produce designs for tube posters, passengers started to imbibe modern art as they travelled. At the same time, the tone of the company's image was raised" (13 July, 2013).

## HARLAXTON MANOR

**A** SUNNY SUNDAY AFTERNOON and the gigantic doors of Harlaxton Manor swung open for the Society. An amazing building indeed, the inside more so perhaps than the outside, from the gloomy vestibule with its gargantuan trophies to the operatic cedar staircase mounting through billowing stucco draperies and cornucopias of fruit and cherubs to two figures of Father Time leaning out with real scythes from the painted heavens.

But the human story that emerges from this vast Victorian extravagance of a building is as fascinating as the building itself. Over the twenty years of its construction it seems to have been a lonely man's hobby. Set on creating a pseudo-Elizabethan palace for himself, Gregory Gregory (1786-1854) spent ten years roaming English mansions for ideas – Burghley for the turrets, Audley End for the Great Hall – and ransacking Europe for treasures.



With building under way, there would have been teams of horses struggling up through the local lanes with crate-loads of Renaissance doors, massive marble chimney-pieces, urns, statues and ornate furniture from France, Italy, Austria, all to be incorporated in this huge wedding-cake of a house. But it was not all splendid show. There were practical Victorian ingenuities, too: the servants' tight cast-iron spiral staircases concealed in the walls, a small covered railway to bring in the coal from a lane one-and-a-half miles away, and warm air ducted from the basement kitchens to heat the state rooms (though the smell of boiled onions and cabbage might not have been welcome perhaps in the Long Gallery or Blue Drawing Room).

Almost every future need had been foreseen – private quarters for Gregory Gregory and his wife of course, and a nursery for the children and adjoining quarters for their nanny. But in the event there was no Mrs.Gregory

Gregory, no children, no nanny. Gregory Gregory died childless and alone, after just three years in the palace he had created.

Harlaxton manor was rescued from demolition in 1939 by the eccentric Violet Van der Elst, was later sold to the Jesuits and now belongs to the University of Evansville, Indiana. Beautifully restored, but with its furniture, tapestries and paintings long gone, the house has a kind of

empty splendour that dwarfs the stackable plastic chairs and tables and be-jeaned and T-shirted students. And if the lectures of their British Studies tutors should grow dull, they can always lean discreetly back in the Golden Drawing Room (*pictured across*) and try to count the cherubs swarming round the gilded frieze and clambering on the stucco garlands. A hundred? Many more, at a guess.



Society members at Harlaxton Manor

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## SOCIETY NOTES

THE GODS of cyber-space willing, many members should have received their copy of this Newsletter by e-mail. If any of these members feel, on reflection, that they would prefer to revert to receiving their Newsletter by post in the traditional way, please e-mail Marion Brassington at [philip.mar@virgin.net](mailto:philip.mar@virgin.net) and let her know. If, on the other hand, there are members who would now like to start receiving their Newsletter by e-mail, please e-mail Marion as above with your e-mail address.

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It is with great regret that we record the death of long-standing member Hilary Healey. Hilary had a deep and wide-ranging interest in the history of the area, whether involved in the reconstruction of a Romano-British pottery kiln out in the fens or giving

a talk to the Society on the 18<sup>th</sup> century headstones in local churchyards. Her book *A Fenland Landscape Glossary for Lincolnshire* (1997) not only elucidates ancient local dialect words to do with the land, such as *fleak*, *pightle* and *wong* (i.e. wattled hurdle, small grass paddock and low land), but also throws light on the history behind familiar local place-names, such as Tydd Gote (*gote* = sluice for draining land) or Pode Hole (*pode* = frog or toad). More recently, she collaborated on *Wide Horizons: A History of South Holland's Landscape and People* (2010), the short book introducing the area to newcomers to the district, and her help is acknowledged in Judith Withyman's history of Pinchbeck between 1560 and 1660, *Geese, Gowts and Galligaskins* (2012). She will be much missed – and not just by the Society.

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## MUCH APPRECIATED

● **Johnson Hospital, Priory Road.** It is good to see the former Outpatients Unit of the hospital back in use again, as a pharmacy, stylishly transformed inside and with a carpark on the spot and much longer opening hours than the other pharmacies (Mon.- Sat. 7am – 10pm, Sun. 8am-6pm). On-going painting and smartening up of the main building and nurses' quarters holds out hope of these returning to use, though no information has been released.

● **The former CAB office in the Crescent** for its use as a

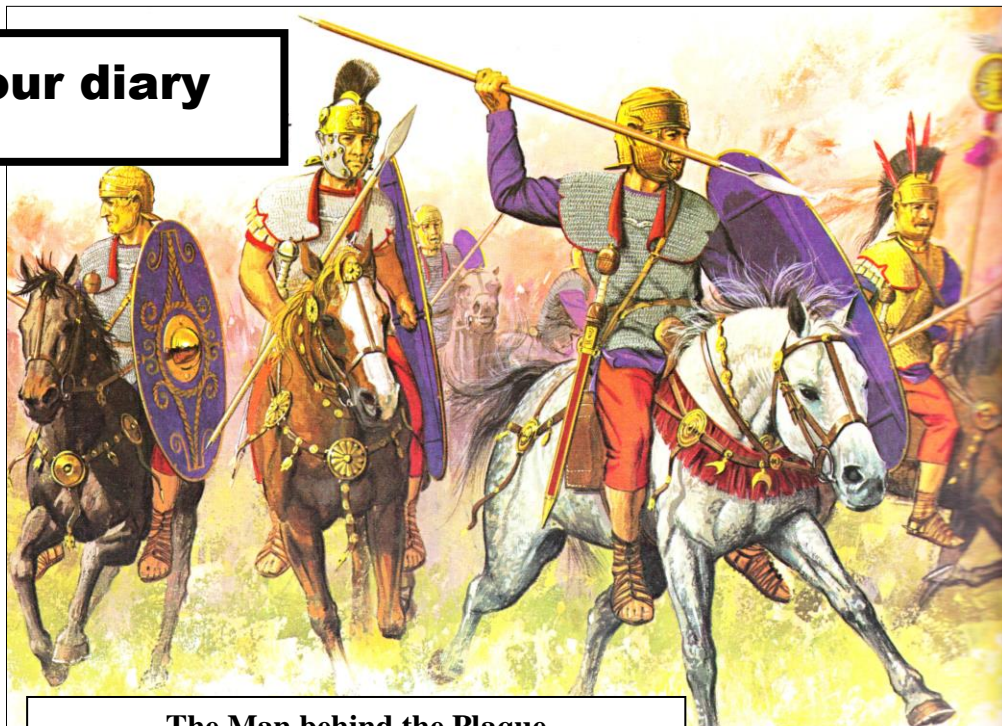
display-case for works created at the Unique Cottage Farm Studios at Low Fulney. How good it would be if the windows of other empty or boarded up shops could be used in the same way to showcase the work and activities of local clubs and societies.

● **Bakkavor** for the meticulous maintenance of its long boundary-hedge.

● Particularly fine **floral displays** in the Crescent and, as always, at the Red Lion and the Station.

## For your diary

Not only was Peter Connolly (1935-2012) a superb illustrator, but he was also a national and international authority on ancient Greek and Roman warfare. Yet Spalding never knew such an eminent figure was living here in their town. The achievement of this quiet, unassuming man unrecognised in our midst yet with a world-wide reputation will be explored in .....



Detail from Peter Connolly:  
*The Roman Army*

### The Man behind the Plaque

illustrated talk on Peter Connolly by

**Ed Fordham**

Tues. 19 November, 7.30 Spalding Grammar School  
Business Centre

## MAGPIE

### Pedestrian Towns

Living Streets' new report, *The Pedestrian Pound.....* shows that investment in public realm improvements can boost footfall and trading by up to 40%. Pedestrians stay longer and spend up to six times more than people arriving by car, yet this is largely ignored by politicians and policy makers.

Healthy high streets are full of people. The Government needs to invest in and support good quality public spaces where people can easily and conveniently arrive and move about on foot. **Tony Armstrong** (CEO Living Streets) & **Chris Wade** (CEO Action for Market Towns) – *Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 2013.

### Rabbit Hutch Homes

In 1920, the average semi-detached new-build had four bedrooms and measured 1,647 sq ft (RIBA).

Today's equivalent has three bedrooms and 925 sq ft. Typical terrace houses have shrunk from 1,020 sq ft and three bedrooms, to 645 sq ft and two bedrooms. .... England has some of the smallest housing in Europe. *The Guardian*, 21 August 2013.

### Our Communal Masterpiece

I have long believed that the countryside is our great communal masterpiece. The value of that phrase, for me, is two-fold. Firstly, within it lies the idea the countryside belongs to all of us, not just to those who materially own it. Secondly, it retains the idea of beauty, while being realistic about how this marvellous thing came into being.

An innocent eye might look at the English countryside and think that it is natural beauty incarnate, but of course, in reality it's the result of hundreds of years of farming, husbanding, cropping, wood-planting, hedge-building and other human interactions with the land. We appear to be looking at something straightforwardly natural, when we're actually looking at something extremely complex and deliberated – something that we, and the people who went before us on this particular bit of Earth, have made.....The man-made qualities of our landscape should remind us that if we like the way it looks, we should keep on working at it. **Andrew Motion** (Poet Laureate 1999-2009 and current CPRE President)

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