



SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October 2014

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

YOUR CIVIC SOCIETY continues to strive to make Spalding as good as it can be to live in and visit. The Planning Team works with varied success. So, for example, we have successfully objected to plans for a tall mast on Ladbroke's in the Sheepmarket and to a day nursery in Woolram Wygate, where increased parking chaos threatened. Sometimes we suggest improvements to planning applications – as in the proportions of the replacement building for the former Tax Office, and a reduction in the number of flats in the former Vine public house, so that all bedrooms will have access to natural light, and the proposal for more trees to soften the impact of the newly asphalted carpark at the Grammar School. We have welcomed traditional shop fronts for historic buildings in the town centre and have encouraged the housing development proposed for Law's Yard: “an attractive enclave – with well-tree-ed landscaping, varied roofscape ... and a streetscape not dominated by car-parking”.

Those results are in the public domain, but there are also things we have achieved by stealth. For example, alerting the Highways Department to missing slats in the Hall Place seating, getting piles of gritting salt removed from the base of the Hall Place trees, and drawing SHDC's attention to the need to water wilting plants in the Hall Place planters.

All these are from the past year or so. None made the local press (being uncontroversial) and few reached the Planning Committee, so our positive contributions remain unknown.

Various conclusions are to be drawn: we do not deserve the negative image attached to us in some quarters – and we are sometimes misrepresented in the Press (as, for example, over the proposals for Law's shop front) – so do speak to your Committee if you have any concerns about this. We need to be assured that we are carrying our membership along with us. Secondly, the work the Planning Team does is varied and interesting, and we offer an invitation to any of you to come to the SHDC Offices to read through plans and make constructive suggestions. (Currently the Team meets there on Mondays, but this could be changed.) If you know anyone – maybe a non-member – who might like to apply him/herself to these activities, please let us know. There must be people out there who would like to put their qualities of vigilance to good effect.

We are recognised as an effective pressure group, and there is much more good that we can do in the future, especially if we can spread the work amongst more hands. Please come forward!

David Jones



In association with
Lincolnshire Film Archive



WHAT? WHERE?

WHEN?

Test your wits and local knowledge
against fascinating clips from films in
the Lincolnshire Film Archive.

Come as a team or form one
when you get here.

Spalding Grammar School (Atrium)
Tuesday, 18 November 7.30pm
Entry £2.50 per person
(to include soft drinks and nibbles)



Try it. **What:** Pretty obviously road-surfacing with tarmac. **Where:** the background pub and by-gone shop names indicate.....? **When:** not plastic cones, but folding wooden warnings, and are those granite sets being covered by tarmac? Some over-trousers, but otherwise no work-wear, just ordinary clothes: flat caps, proper shirts (most collarless), a few waistcoats. Don't these take us well back into the last century? The 50s? But not earlier, as Hall Place has a traffic roundabout (bottom right).
(See insert or zoom up on your screen for cinema level of detail.)

PLANNING MATTERS

GATEWAY Business Park, the enormous green-field development of warehouses, depots and offices on the southern outskirts, has been approved, although they could have been accommodated separately on brown-field sites within the town or on existing industrial estates. A huge ware-house near Fen End Lane has been withdrawn from it, however, offering the residents relief from the threat of noise they feared (for the time being), and a safer cycling route between Little London and the development is being considered.

When built, the huge **Holland Park** housing development at Spalding Common could be something of a showpiece, as its layout and housing designs (approved in outline four or five years ago) are vastly superior to most other recent housing developments in the town. It is disappointing, therefore, to find several retreats in parts of the detailed proposals now coming forward. We hope both developer Broadgate and the Council will hold firm to the original designs.

A worrying trend is the number of recent applications to put up tall fences that stick out into **open-plan streetscapes**, spoiling their overall character.

A request by member David Hill for a small group to be given a tour of the **Magistrates Court** to see for themselves just what the problems are (and possibly suggest solutions?) was refused – “for health and safety reasons”. We have of course submitted a strong objection to its closure, and MP John Hayes continues in his efforts to get the Court reopened.

We are pleased that two proposals to which we objected have been refused: for a 50ft. mast on the top of the **former Post Office** in the Sheepmarket, and for a day-nursery in **Woolram Wygate** (which would have intensified the already horrendous school-run parking problems the road’s residents suffer).

We are also pleased that the Georgian-style apartment block to replace the **Tax Offices** on High Street has been approved in its revised version (i.e. modified in the way we had suggested) to avoid competing with the listed Holland House.

Finally, we welcome the appointment of a **Town Centre Manager** again for Spalding, and we look forward to an early meeting with him.

Planning Sub-Committee

CAR-PARKS AND MARKETS REVIEW

THE REVIEW is due any time now. So why has this £20,000 consultation been pre-empted by suddenly uprooting the seats in the Market Place?

In our submission to the consultants, we noted the retail pressure on Spalding’s town centre from on-line shopping, Stamford, Peterborough, Springfields and the edge-of-centre chain stores of Holland Market. Nevertheless, we argued, Spalding should aim to become a shopping destination of choice.

The key to this would be a general regeneration of the historic centre, so that, in itself, it becomes an attractive and interesting place in which to spend some time – through its character and individuality, the charm of its historic buildings and public spaces and the friendliness of its atmosphere. Without this, efforts simply to enliven the stall market are unlikely to achieve their aim.

Thus, we should like to see a tightening up of maintenance, with a clamp-down on fly-posting and sagging plastic banners, graffiti, asphalt patches in block paving; an end to blanked-out shop windows (which kill footfall) and to the neglect of first floors; the raising of window-dressing standards to those of, say, Hill’s Furniture Store, Store Twenty One or Watkin’s. There are opportunities not yet taken: for bringing pockets of derelict land back into use, for planting up the Hall Place planters

to give *year-round* interest, for trees and cycle stands alongside Ladbroke’s. And a more friendly arrangement for the Market Place street furniture – not its removal!

For the market itself, we argued for a re-arrangement of the stalls in Hall Place to face concentrically onto the seating circle, and in the Market Place to make room for the Red Lion’s tables. An on-the-stones auction up by the South Holland Centre would stem the northwards drift of the Saturday market. Enliven things with a programme of entertainment in the Hall Place performance circle: Punch-and-Judy, ukulele band, Act II and Polka Dot, rock bands (not too loud!), gymnastics and martial arts, a mini-ceilidh. Give the buskers a place – some are very good. Let local clubs and societies showcase their activities and encourage bystanders to have a go. Might the market be extended into the Sheepmarket: car-boot sales? used car sales? children’s flea market? occasional continental market? And so on. Our submission to the consultants is full of positive suggestions and ideas.

Besides generally promoting the town and securing new businesses for the empty shops, the Town Centre Manager would, we hope, be strongly involved in promoting much of the above.

Our submission also re-surveyed the use of the town centre car-parks. The results are set out on p.4.

Then and Now – In case you’ve missed them, look out for the *Then and Now* photographs of Spalding in the *Lincolnshire Free Press*, contributed alternately each month by Marion Brassington and John Honnor. Some places have scarcely changed over 50 years; others are unrecognisable.



Unlike above, Tuesday 30 September saw over 30 people of all ages on the seats enjoying the late summer sunshine.

CHANGING AN ORDINARY DAY

public spaces

IN JULY AND AUGUST this year the theatre company of which I am the director, Tangled Feet, collaborated with local South Holland arts organisation Transported to create a piece of theatre specially for the area, inspired by the rich heritage of Spalding and the River Welland – a series of performances that happened in public spaces for an audience of local people.

From research and conversations with partners at Chain Bridge Forge, Springfields and Ayscoughfee Hall, as well as with members of Spalding Civic Society and local historians, a history of arrivals and departures emerged, of traders and festivals, of fens and forges, of fire and water.

Impressions of Saturday’s promenade performance and spectacular evening show and Sunday’s festival of memories can be found elsewhere in this issue. The events were an exciting and unique experience for audience and actors alike; full of intimate interactions between the public and the characters, beautiful images floating down the river and a huge crowd gasping at actors juggling fire.

Making work in public spaces is at the heart of Tangled Feet’s practice. Creating theatre performances in spaces that the public already inhabit gives greater access to people who may not normally take part in cultural activities. It changes the shape of an ordinary day and gives public space new breath and new possibilities. When the performances are inspired by local

issues, heritage and an area’s psycho-geography, the relationship between the audience and the art can be extremely connected, exciting and thought-provoking.

For the audiences of *Burntwater* the public spaces where they met characters on stilts, floating market stalls and fire performers will never be the same again. Once you fill a space with stories and characters, it is these poetic and entertaining elements the audience long hold in their minds. They do not say, “This is where I bought my new shoes;” they say, “This is where that lady on stilts traded seeds for honey.” They don’t say, “This is where the rubbish collects in the reeds;” but “This is where the fire floated on the water.”

These experiences brighten and change people’s lives. They give the chance for the imagination to wonder – to be inspired, entertained and challenged. It helps us to dream, think and change. It makes people communicate with each other and see the world (even for just one second) in a completely new way. And it is my belief that this is just the sort of thing that should be happening in public space. They cannot only be spaces for commerce and advertising, but spaces for the imagination and the community. The reaction to *Burntwater* proved that Spalding has a huge appetite for it.

Nathan Curry

(Co-Artistic Director, Tangled Feet)



PARKING SURVEY IN DEMAND

BACK IN MAY 2011 the Society undertook a survey of the SHDC pay-and-display carparks to ascertain the occupancy numbers, and to verify the need – or not – for providing additional spaces at Herring Lane. The conclusion was ‘not needed’ and the proposal was dropped.

The survey was later made available to the LCC’s Spalding Transport Strategy project, to be published shortly, but unfortunately the figures were initially misinterpreted, with ‘spaces available’ being confused with ‘cars parked’, exactly the reverse. The error was pointed out and later corrected.

Following a request from the consultants undertaking the Car Parks and Markets Review for SHDC, a further carparks survey was carried out in July 2014 to see if there had been any changes. This survey was also passed to the Transport Strategy team.

The conclusions were:-

1. Occupancy has increased by 8% since 2011.
2. Tuesday (market day) is the busiest day.
3. Even at the busiest times there are plenty of spaces, if you are prepared to walk 200 yards or so and pay.
4. Strangers might have difficulty locating alternative carparks.
5. There are also hundreds of free shopping carpark spaces with generous time-limits (e.g. Sainsbury’s, B&Q, M&S, Lidl, etc.).
6. There are also many free on-street spaces, some time-limited, some not (e.g. Westlode Street, Churchgate, New Road, Broad Street, etc.) These usually fill up first.

John Honnor



Spalding & District Civic Society							
Spalding town centre car parks Occupancy Survey No3				June/July 2014			
Location	Total Spaces	Spaces empty and available					
		Mon 07/07/2014	Tues 01/07/2014	Wed 02/07/2014	Thur 03/07/2014	Fri 04/07/2014	Sat 28/06/2014
Holland Road	48	14	13	21	10	24	35
Vista	63	19	13	12	1	14	42
Vine Street	66	37	0	22	22	13	12
Sheep Market	21	8	7	11	8	5	3
Victoria Street	180	107	62	101	82	84	100
Winfrey Avenue	87	65	42	54	53	56	34
Herring Lane	74	25	8	16	19	6	3
Westlode	147	70	21	62	75	57	74
Total	686	345	166	299	270	259	303
Note	Disabled spaces not included						
	Survey taken between 11.00am & noon						
	All these car parks are SHDC pay & display						

BURNTWATER

IT WAS ALL VERY STRANGE – from the searchers, “parched, dry and arid”, emerging amongst the bemused Saturday morning shoppers at Springfields and singing songs of their homeland, to the scattered seeds and volleys of petals as they paddled away along the Coronation Channel. Landing at High Bridge, they mingled through the market, on foot, on stilts, trading a handful of parsnip seeds for a crisp here, a biro there, an umbrella, a cherry for a safety-pin. And, curious, people stayed with them, as the searchers moved off – who knew where? – downstream to the wheels and fire of the Chain Bridge Forge. Later, over 1500 turned up for the evening finale at the Twin Bridges.

I doubt if anyone would have seen the event complete or knew exactly what it was they had found themselves drawn into. A sort of unfolding of human history maybe? From nomadic search to cultivation, to barter and trading, to the discovery of fire and wheel and metal, and finally art in the juggled torches, acrobatics, fireworks, light and song as darkness fell along the Welland.

Two things, though, were crystal clear. First, people’s smiling readiness to be involved, whether children, elderly ladies, a Japanese visitor or two slightly woozy youths; the readiness of the market-traders to trade a bag of cherries, a jar of honey (for a handful of seeds!); people’s readiness to hold the end of a bit of wool as a sort of red-wool cat’s cradle evolved. What did it all mean? No matter. “Why can’t they do things like this more often?” was the comment amongst the shoppers. In short, it had shown the potential of simple live events or entertainments to enliven the vitality of the market – and thus to ensure its survival.



Second, it had shown the invaluable asset of the Hall Place seating circle as performance space, with shoppers gathering to watch and applaud. (However have the seats been allowed to become a dumping-ground on market days for boxes and plastic sheets?)

Sunday in Ayscoughfee Gardens was quite different: fiddle and accordion, join in round the maypole, picnicking families on the grass. And reminiscence – whether local voices whispering from the loudspeakers along the yew tree walk or pages pegged out like clothes along a line: leaving school at thirteen, long days toiling down the long rows with tin-can hoes nailed to a pole, Samphire Day when the schools were closed and everyone flocked to the marshes along with a brass band, the old remembering their grandparents’ memories, Italian prisoners of war working the land..... In the here and now a particular people in a particular place across the generations. A community.

As they disappeared into the Ayscoughfee trees at the end, it was difficult to define what the *Burntwater* performers had left behind. Ideas, suggestions, possibilities? Hope? Of how shared experiences of the arts (in the widest sense) can strengthen the bonds of community – particularly poignant after the demise of the Flower Parade.

John Charlesworth



Specially devised for Spalding by the street theatre group Tangled Feet, Burntwater was part of the £2.5m programme to involve people of South Holland and Boston Borough in the arts, overseen by the ‘Transported’ organisation. The Civic Society is grateful to have been invited to be involved in the early stages of the evolution of an event which has given so much food for thought.

GEARING UP

USING A MOTOR CAR is a virtual necessity for many people who live in villages or the open countryside in South Holland. Consequently it is all too easy to dismiss cycling as a minority interest throughout the whole of this area, and to give it low priority for planning and investment.

However, it is wrong to suggest that each pound spent on cycling and each improvement of conditions for cyclists conflicts with the interests of motorists. Every time that someone chooses to use a bicycle instead of a car – for the school run, for example, or for travelling to work – there will be less traffic and congestion on Spalding’s roads and less demand for parking space. That actually benefits those who must use their cars, and helps bus companies to operate to time.

Cycling is a good way to keep fit, free from pollution. It is a growing sport and our flat countryside lends itself to leisure cycling and tourism.

Shifting Cycling Up a Gear was the title of the Government’s 2013 high-profile policy statement about cycling. What would this mean for the Spalding area? In order to find out, PEDALS – Spalding’s Cycle Action Group – organised a forum earlier this year, attended by representatives of local authorities, the police, Sustrans and the Spalding Cycling Club.



By bringing together organisations with various interests in cycling, the forum, and the subsequent coverage in the local press, succeeded in highlighting opportunities to work together in the future to provide more, safer opportunities for people to decide to cycle. We hope people will become more aware of the benefits of cycling; and look forward to South Holland becoming more like Dutch Holland, where people choose the type of transport which is most suitable for their journey, rather than the car being the automatic first choice every time they want to go on even a short journey.

We were very pleased that John Hayes, our MP and now also a high-ranking minister in the Department of Transport, accepted our invitation to chair the forum. Soon afterwards he wrote in the *Lincolnshire Free Press* that he would be happy to chair this forum annually to “measure progress towards making South Holland a capital of cycling”. We look forward to Spalding becoming a safer and more welcoming place for cyclists in the years ahead.

Roger Smith

MUCH APPRECIATED



– not least for its restrained paintwork after the garish ‘day-glo’ of the previous business and the shop next door.

● **Western Power Distribution** and their sub-contractor for the rapid replacement of the block paving outside M&Co after their extensive works there – and done properly, not boded with cement as outside the South Holland Centre.

● **Unique Cottage Studios** – for their display window in the Crescent, always attractively set out. Their pumpkin-time window excelled itself this year: a work of art overall and full of inventive and imaginative detail on the theme. Why can’t more of our empty shop windows be used for display in this way?

- **Public clocks that keep the time:-** Parish Church, M&Co, Brantano, South Holland Centre (mostly). It is symbolic of the way the Magistrates Court is opting out from our community life that its prominent and once reliable clock is now stopped.
- **Spalding in Bloom** – for a particularly fine array of hanging baskets this year. Congratulations on winning gold.
- **George Adams and Flowers ‘n’ Things** for going that little bit further. (*Left and below.*)

● The opening of the new shop **Charmed Interiors** in the Sheepmarket



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