



SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

June 2020



Spring 2020

*Full many a flower [was] born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.*

Thomas Gray: *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1750)

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

WHEN I ATTENDED the very successful Town Centre Stakeholder event in February, to explore options for transforming the town centre to meet the changing needs of the 21st century, I am sure that no one in the room thought that within weeks a global pandemic would bring about economic challenges that could potentially change the use of high streets around the world permanently.

The event was very well put together by South Holland District Council, as it brought people together in groups of representatives from different local organisations and businesses in an open discussion covering several themes. On the table I was at, we highlighted the challenges that the increased use of internet shopping would mean for our town centre and how the agricultural and horticultural heritage of the town is something to celebrate and to use to provide a unique offering to

attract visitors to the town. We talked about making the market the focus of the town and making much more use of the river that was for so long the town's key trading artery. We talked about improving access, so that buses could stop much nearer to the town centre, and about the need to involve as many people in the town in the discussions that we all expected would be the main focus of 2020. I felt that there was a real sense of optimism on the day, which was carried over to the following Town Forum at the beginning of March. For once there seemed to be so much promise in the shared desire to see our town centre thrive, with an openness to new ideas and thinking. None of us then really knew what was about to hit us.

Looking back, it seems as if it was in a different world. Yet has that promise disappeared? I believe not. Indeed Covid-19 has exposed the fragility of our supermarkets' supply chains, whilst [Page 3 ►

PLANNING MATTERS

DESPITE CORONAVIRUS, planning applications are still coming in and being processed. As usual, the bulk of them involve house extensions. However, there have been some applications to create domestic accommodation in Spalding town centre, above the former Bun's Bakery and what used to be White's Gift Shop. It is good to have people living in the centre of town, as the additional pairs of eyes make vandalism a little less likely. The Bun's Bakery site is interesting in that there are the remains of an air-raid shelter to the rear, and I have agreed with LCC Heritage Officer Ian Marshman that it should be fully recorded before demolition. In addition to these first-floor flats, there is an unusual application for a small single-storey dwelling behind The Crescent, adjacent to the Sessions House/Police Station site. As it will be almost invisible from any angle, there is no reason to object to it.

Another unusual application is for a brick-built barbecue on Solent Drive, not a place we have

noticed before. My conclusion was that if it was a problem to the neighbours, it should be up to them to object; my only issue was that the application was retrospective, and we don't like those.

The biggest application is for renovating the windows of the Gamlyn Almshouses in Church Street. I recommend readers to look up H16-0337/0338-20 on the SHDC Planning website, as the documentation of the windows is full of detail and with many photographs. The windows are more varied than one would expect and have suffered various degrees of decay over the years. Five options are offered for resolving the issue – for example, replacing them all with steel or aluminium frames, which would be low-maintenance but not authentic in appearance. We have expressed a preference for the windows all to be taken out and the cast-iron frames repaired in a factory and treated and repainted there. My guess is that it would cost the Council Tax payer quite a lot – but we were asked for our opinion.

David Jones

SOCIETY NOTES

A WARM WELCOME to new member John Tippler, whose vivid reminiscences of Spalding in the 1940s and '50s appeared in *The Voice* a few months ago.

- Congratulations to the winners of our popular Photo Quiz in February – the Jones family and the Editor – and many thanks to Roger Smith, who devised it, and to Marian Boxall and Kath Price for arranging the refreshments.

- Working from home? Why not a committee meeting from home? So there it was, on 30 June, the committee's first virtual meeting – via Zoom and phone. It was generally felt to have worked, so this may be the way forward at the moment, until more normal times return. Meanwhile, thank you to Melvyn Price for organising it. .



- The virus crisis has had contrary effects on *The Bakers*: it has delayed things generally on the one hand, but speeded up the closure of Spalding Bakery on the other, so that temporary storage for the statue has had to be found at short notice. Fortunately, a kind person has stepped in to the rescue.



- Following the success of our two previous calendars, we're preparing a further one for 2021. Therefore, we hope you had your camera or smart phone with you on your lock-down walks or cycle rides, and as a result came back with a photograph or two that could feature in next year's calendar. We're looking for attractive or interesting corners of Spalding, village scenes, landscapes. Or you may have a nice local view taken a year or two ago. Don't be shy about letting us have a look at them. The Editor will be happy to receive them as prints, CD or memory stick (contact details on P.6). Or they could be e-mailed to Marian Boxall at marianboxall@btinternet.com

One-way street in the centre of Boston with a contra-flow cycle lane installed by L.C.C.▶



MINI-HOLLAND

Roger Smith



◀ Not quite Denmark or the Netherlands, but fully appreciated cycle stands in Hall Place (2016).

“MINI-HOLLANDS’ blooming like so many tulips in towns & cities right across the country.”

Those were the Prime Minister's words on 11 February, announcing the Government's investment in new cycling schemes. By mentioning Holland and tulips, he has virtually invited Spalding to be the flagship for the Government's resolve to enable more people to cycle.

"We recognise this moment for what it is: a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities.Active travel [i.e. walking and cycling] is affordable, delivers significant health benefits, has been shown to improve wellbeing, mitigates congestion, improves air quality and has no carbon emissions at the point of use. Towns and cities based around active travel will have happier and healthier citizens as well as lasting local economic benefits."

The Transport Secretary's this time, on 9 May.

Many people in Spalding make short journeys between their homes and schools, work-places, shops and other destinations. The following changes are just some of the many that could be made in Spalding to make cyclists and pedestrians feel safer and more welcome there:

- Journeys to schools by bicycle and on foot from our growing residential areas should be safe along their entire lengths; for example, there should be protected crossing-places for cyclists and pedestrians at busy places such as at the "Twin Bridges".

- Special provision is needed for cycling alongside the B1356 linking Pinchbeck and Spalding, a road that will become even busier when more homes are built near the Spalding Western Relief Road.

- The traffic lights at both ends of the High Bridge need pedestrian crossing phases, to make it easier and safer to walk between the parts of the historic town centre on each side of the river.

- A "contra-flow" cycle lane on the east side of Double Street would extend the existing riverside cycle-route from Holland Road footbridge into the town centre.

Anti-social, illegal and thoughtless actions by a minority of cyclists, pedestrians and motorists are unacceptable. The Government should run a high-profile road safety campaign in parallel with the new requirements.

The Transport Secretary also said: "We know cars will continue to remain vital for many, but as we look to the future we must build a better country with greener travel habits, cleaner air and healthier communities." This is very true in this area, where many folk live at a distance from Spalding, in places which have no public transport. More walking and cycling for short journeys in and near Spalding will not only benefit those who will walk and cycle, but will also reduce traffic congestion and the demand for car-parking spaces, helping those who need their cars. **Roger Smith**



Notice on riverside path opposite the Houses of Parliament.

◀ Page 1] demonstrating the resourcefulness of independent traders in adapting to the change forced upon us all. It has also brought about a new kind of community spirit through the spontaneous actions of residents of the town who set up the Spalding Covid-19 Kindness Team to deliver key essentials to those in our communities advised to self-isolate. The group gained the support of independent traders and several councillors alike. It has demonstrated there are those who care about others in the town – and in doing so have provided an invaluable lifeline to individuals and small businesses alike.

It is people that make up a town. When we have

got through these difficult times, our town centre will need much more tender loving care than any of us who came together in the South Holland Centre imagined. Will those who have shown that they care about the people of the town go on to show that they care about the town itself? I hope so.

For those involved in the Covid-19 Kindness Team, I have a thought: your energy and skills would be welcome additions to the Spalding and District Civic Society, so that we can all come together to deliver the same level of kindness you delivered to the people of the town to the fabric of the town itself. Will you join us? **John Bland**

THE AGM THAT WASN'T

BY THE WEEKEND before the AGM it was evident that the coronavirus epidemic was established in the country and spreading, so the committee took the decision to cancel the AGM, partly because members' anxiety was likely to result in a minimal turnout, but mainly to avoid risking anyone's safety. Lockdown was declared a week later. Therefore, printed below, are condensed versions of the reports prepared to present to the AGM. If you have any questions about particular aspects of them or would like further information, please contact the Chairman or the Editor. (Details back page.)

Chairman

THERE were two significant highlights in the year.

The Hiring statue was unveiled at last in Hall Place. It's been a long journey, but people do stop and look – one's hope for any public art. We have learned a lot, invaluable for the future projects already being explored with Transported Art.

Second was the unveiling of the blue plaque to Baron Shepherd of Spalding by his great-grandson, the Hon. Patrick Shepherd, on 20 July. We have received generous donations from the current Baron, unable to be there in person, and are most grateful.

The donations will make a huge difference, as in times of economic hardship, heritage, arts and cultural organisations find fund raising difficult. I hope that we can find ways to help projects that will create interest in the town, drawing on some of the creativity and new artistic skills that always emerge during times of adversity. Fresh ideas and a younger generation on board will be vital, as we work collectively with all who want to see pride in our town become the new normality.

We have the foundations in the new *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan* with its policies for nurturing and regenerating our town, and I believe that central government really is committed to the future of our high streets. This year 2020/21 could see the first steps towards a town-wide commitment to a revitalised town centre. I am hopeful that challenging times will give way to exciting times. If ever there was a need for a Civic Society, working with others, to help ensure that our town centre becomes the vibrant and attractive place we all want to see in which to work, shop, socialise and live, that time is now. If you know of people who want to see our town thrive, do ask them to join us and even volunteer their skills.

Now is the time, for example, to formulate a concrete plan for returning the Johnson Drinking Fountain to the town centre, so that it can be well on the way to becoming a reality in 2021.

I would like to thank both my predecessor David for mentoring me in my first year as Chair, and our

President John Charlesworth for the enormous contribution that he puts into the Society in general and in particular for nurturing relationships with Transported Art, which I feel will be vital in developing ideas to contribute to the recovery and renaissance of our town from these difficult times.

Thank you too to the other committee members and all who have volunteered for and supported the Society.

I believe that significant strides were made in 2019 to help show what can be achieved with a broad commitment and the will to see our town centre thrive and a sense of pride in it return.

John Bland

Planning

SINCE the last AGM, the Council have approved the conversion of outbuildings behind 15 New Road to residential use, an application we supported. They also agreed with us that a catering trailer would be completely inappropriate on the triangle of land in the Sheep Market next to Hughes Electrical, and that the site of the car wash on Double Street should not be used for car sales. It is regrettable that there is no progress on sympathetic development for either site – or indeed any development at all.

Again the Council agreed with us in refusing permission for PVC replacement windows on 13 Station Street. It was a retrospective application, and it will be interesting to see what enforcement action ensues; as in other such cases, like the requirement to re-instate an internal wall in the (listed) Constitutional Club. We dislike retrospective applications and would be almost inclined to oppose them in principle. Even when one is what is now the Conservative Party Office in Westlode Street!

I am keen to follow up our comments on the planned housing development for the old Welland Hospital site: firstly, the dreary design of the houses themselves, which will not create a "sense of place" – a useful term for commenting on planning applications. Also there is an ideal opportunity here to reduce car use by making a dual-use path [Page 6 ►

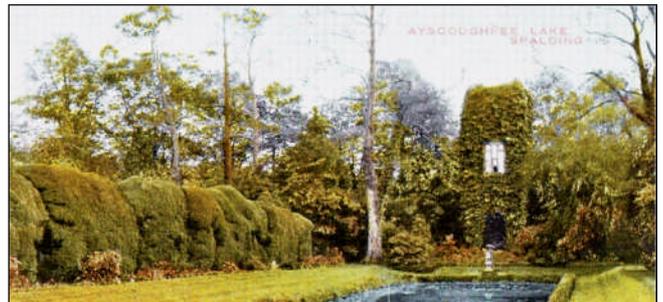
SPALDING 9

We are grateful to member Pat Wensor for this further selection from his collection of old picture post-cards, some over a century old.



The Crescent (1906). The United Methodist Free Church chapel would have dominated the Crescent. It was built in 1878/9, as the previous chapel on the site could no longer accommodate its expanding congregation. Although capable of seating a 1000 or more, by 1955 the members had dwindled to 88, and the building was sold and demolished. (After the grandeur of the stone front, the brick-built side elevation facing Spring Gardens comes as a bit of a let-down – almost as if the building had been designed to fit into a slot between existing tall buildings, when the factory-like sides would have been scarcely visible.)

Ayscoughfee Gardens (1909). The lake and surrounding yews are little changed. The lake has been there since at least 1730 (Grundy map). The tower dates from the 1840s, its four pillars supporting a room for the gentlemen to smoke and play cards. The chamber above was eventually taken over by owls – hence its local name: ‘The Owl Tower’. Despite much protest, it was demolished in 1921, to make way for the War Memorial.



The Sheepmarket (postmarked 1913). Quite a quiet day amongst the metal sheep pens. The imposing Post Office was opened in 1910, and also catered for about 90 telephone subscribers. It was a telegraph office, too (hence the ugly structure above it). The telephone poles (extreme left and right) were very much taller than today's, as the wires were carried over the rooftops of the tall town centre buildings. To the left of the Post Office, across Gore Lane, were two auctioneers', a small pub and a shoe shop. Most of the buildings on the two sides of the Post Office are still there.

Members are invited to send in photographs of parts or details of Spalding they particularly enjoy (print, memory stick or CD) to the Editor – contact details on back page – with a few words about their choice.

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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



MUCH APPRECIATED



● **SHDC** – for its well-thought-out and clearly marked scheme for safe pedestrian movement in Spalding in response to the pandemic, even to the extent of the distancing guidance on the Hall Place seating. Pity to see the efforts ignored by some in our community, heedless of others’ safety as well as their own. Age is not a factor: young man with ear-phones, chatting mothers with baby-buggies, pensioner with her shopping-trolley (all 23 June). Even letters dashed off to the local press incensed at the dreadful inconvenience of being expected to use the left-hand side of the road to get to the Market Place rather than the right. Perhaps they want to see a Leicester lock-down here.

● **SHDC grounds staff** – for keeping planters planted and the centre smart in these stressful times, though for weeks there were few to see their work.

● **Network Rail** – for the care taken to match the new lift-shafts (*circled*) to the architecture of the (listed) station building. It’s not just the exact match of brick colour, but also the roof pitch and the identical eaves (both overhang and dog-tooth brickwork below). The attention to detail is outstanding. It’s only a pity that from some angles the shaft stands visually isolated from the station building itself, rather than being integrated with it.



◀ *Page 4*] through the houses from Roman Bank to the new Lidl supermarket. I have cut through on such a path in Bremen, Germany. It is well used and, coincidentally, leads also to a branch of Lidl.

As always, I invite members to comment on any planning applications that catch their eye; the *Lincolnshire Free Press* includes application numbers in its lists, making it easier to locate particular applications on the Council’s web-site. We battle on, wondering what effect the coronavirus situation will have on planning applications in the district

David Jones

Projects and Campaigns

TOWN Centre Regeneration. A warm welcome for the Council’s *Holbeach and Spalding Town Improvement Works* report. Key provisions are:- a single officer for the town centres, replacing the current fragmented responsibilities; a budget of £500,000 over three years; a Steering Group drawn from the community. The Society will be represented on this group.

The Chairman’s report on the inaugural pooling of ideas from some 50 business owners, traders, councillors and community groups is on Page 1. The previous week our small thinktank of Society members, Transported Art and town-centre councillors had met in animated discussion to decide issues to prioritise with the Steering Group.

It looks potentially game-changing for the town centre.

Market Art Project. After two years entangled in red-tape *The Hiring* sculpture is now finally established in Hall Place. The forthcoming closure of The Spalding Bakery saw the Addo Food Group generously agreeing to donate the statue from their Fulney factory to the Project. We are discussing possible sites with the Council. Then,

at last, in continuing partnership with Transported Art, we can turn to the art works featuring the livestock of our historic market. We hope to see the Project incorporated in the Council’s town centre regeneration programme.

. Blue plaques. The plaque commemorating George Shepherd, First Baron Spalding, was unveiled in New Road on a bright and breezy morning in July by his great-grandson, with supporting speeches from Councillor Nick Worth (SHDC) and Mark Pople (local Labour Party). [*See Chairman’s Report on Page 4.*]

2020 Calendar. A successful venture: 100 printed and sold. A 2021 calendar is planned, possibly in collaboration with Spalding Photographic Society.

Threat to green recreation spaces. The Council has completed its review of the district’s green leisure spaces. Meanwhile, the Severn Road Playing Field has been saved from development, thanks to increasingly exacting flood regulations from the Environment Agency. We shall continue to insist that Spalding’s under-provided green leisure spaces are not for development.

Blanking-out of shop windows. A Station Street shop has taken the vinyl off its windows! May others follow suit. We hope the issue will figure in the town centre regeneration programme.

Johnson Memorial Drinking Fountain. The reinstatement of the fountain (currently in Council storage) in the town centre must now also join the regeneration programme.

Palisading of pipeline across the river at Haverfield Road. The proposed joint action by district and county councils never materialised. Our campaign to get the regulations on “permitted development” changed will continue.

John Charlesworth

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