

# SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

June 2019

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I WOULD LIKE to begin my remarks by paying tribute to my predecessor David Jones, who I am pleased to say will be serving as Vice-Chairman this year, and I find comfort that he and our President John Charlesworth are available should I need their advice from time to time.

I confess that I am not a native of Spalding. However, the Spalding area is embedded into my DNA, as I have discovered through my family history research, having traced various lines back over hundreds of years. I have lived and worked in the town for getting on for 30 years now, and whilst my memories of the town do not go as far back as some in the Society, I no doubt share with many of you a sense of frustration that the town seems to have lost some of its Civic Pride over recent years. We hope that our Blue Plaques Scheme and Market Art Project will in some small way help the town to recover some of that pride.

Spalding does have much to offer, from a legacy of many interesting buildings bequeathed to us by the town's forefathers to that Jewel in the Crown bequeathed to us by Mother Nature and harnessed by man, i.e. the River Welland running through the heart of Spalding. These are assets we should cherish and champion. Interspersed are the three long-derelect eyesores highlighted by my predecessor in the last newsletter. The time for some kind of concerted action to encourage the owners of these sites to do something about them is overdue, and I will look for inspiration from other Civic Societies

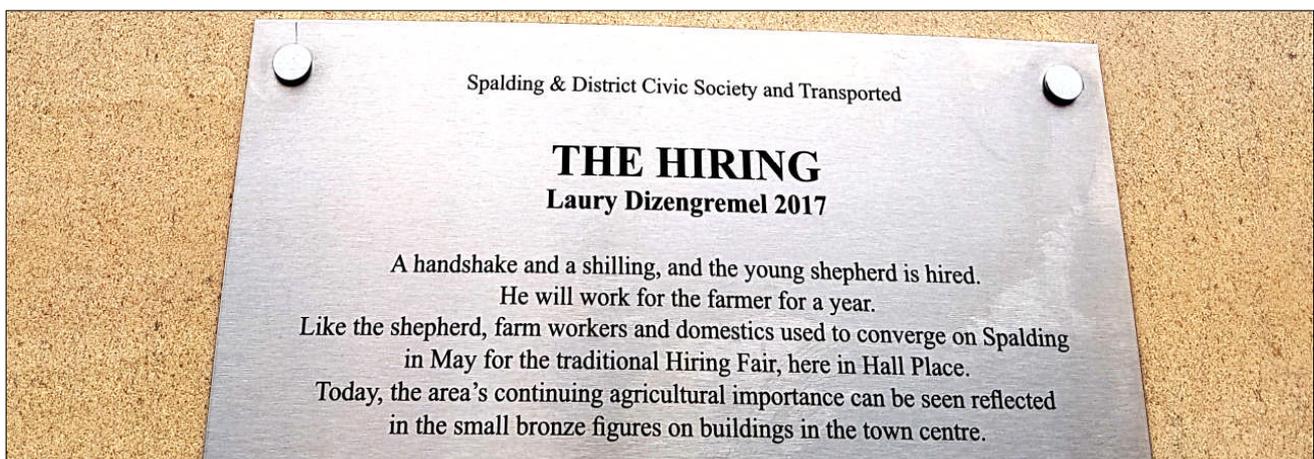
that have been faced with, and resolved, similar situations.

The basic element of building Civic Pride is, in my view, the people who make up the community. It is a fundamental right for everyone to live in a place that functions well and is also attractive for them to live and work in, but where that is not happening, it surely requires people to come together to encourage those who are in a position to bring about improvements that will be for the benefit of everyone.

It was good to see community action leading to a rethink over the route of the proposed middle section of the Spalding Western Relief Road. That is just the kind of example of people coming together to encourage those with the power to deliver change that we need to see more of. Perhaps you know some of those who have been involved in that action. If they care about where they live, caring about the town should be a short step away. Hopefully some might be persuaded to join us?

One recent development that I hope will raise the profile of the Society and be a platform for people who care about our town to rally round is the launch of our Facebook page. This will, I hope, provide ways to attract new members and also provide a wider platform for people to engage with the Society, and for us to provide more regular updates on our activities. The page is called *Spalding & District Civic Society* – so, if you are on Facebook, please give the page a “Like” and please like and share any posts of interest.

**John Bland**



*The plate on the plinth. More on pp.4&5.*

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## PLANNING MATTERS

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**A** SMALL NUMBER of recent planning applications stands out from the usual house extensions and tree works.

One where the team's views might have diverged from each other was the plan to brighten up the front of the Black Swan in New Road to make it look like a similar establishment in Ireland; any internal dispute was pre-empted by the Council's Planning Committee's refusal of the application.

The largest proposed development in Spalding at present is for housing on the Welland Hospital site and Holbeach Road, being part of the Lidl plans. On the one hand, efforts are being made to make these houses genuinely affordable, as opposed to the technical use of the term 'affordable housing', which often just isn't so for most people. However, the design of the houses is remarkably dull and unimaginative, and does not give the 'sense of place' required by national policy and our own Local Plan,

so we have put in an objection. We have also suggested that vehicle movements in the vicinity could be reduced by making a foot-path/cycle path through the northern part of the Roman Bank section, so that residents of Crown Drive and the north-western reaches of Roman Bank could gain easy, environmentally-friendly access to Lidl and the neighbouring shops. It seems unlikely that our District Council would support this idea, but it is nice to dream of such an enlightened approach.

We also recommended refusal for a proposed second-hand car dealership in Double Street, where the car-wash used to be. Not only does the application lack any detail, but the use envisaged for the site is incompatible with the Conservation Area streetscape and several nearby listed buildings. We feel that the site cries out for a town house, but who is going to make that investment?

**Planning Sub-Committee**

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## SPALDING WESTERN RELIEF ROAD

"If it wasn't tragic, it would be comic" – Sir John Hayes

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**N**O-ONE involved with the proposed Spalding Western Relief Road was unaware of concerns about it, given the various consultations that took place. Nor should they be surprised at the volume of public protest that has now erupted. As early as 2011, along with others, we were high-lighting the absurdity of a bypass with two ends and no middle. No middle, that is, until some indeterminate date – 25 years maybe, says County Hall airily. Not only is it an offence against common-sense – like building two roads up to the Humber and no bridge – but, without a middle, far from relieving congestion in the centre of Spalding, it can only make things worse.

It could hardly be otherwise, with all the traffic generated by the huge housing developments envisaged for north of the Vernatt's and more frequent level-crossing down-times.

Along with others, we have repeatedly made these points in consultations on the Spalding Transport Strategy and on the new Local Plan, both in writing and face-to-face.

Our concerns were confirmed in a 2016 study by the Lincolnshire Highways Alliance. If the Relief Road stays incomplete, it concluded, traffic from the huge northern developments will "remain within the urban area of Spalding ..... causing longer delays at

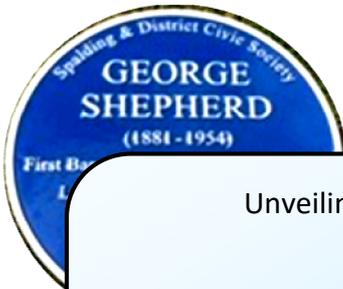
junctions", and "Pinchbeck Road does not presently have the capacity to cater for the higher level of traffic" (Technical Note 03, §1.4).

We also find it unacceptable for Pinchbeck to lose its identity, swallowed up as a suburb of a greater Spalding, with the loss of green space and prime agricultural land.

In vain. These deeply flawed proposals went ahead into the new Local Plan.

But it's not the planners' fault in the end, though. It's the government's. In its belief that key local infrastructure is best left to private developers to finance, in return for planning permission to build huge swathes of housing. No-one knows when that middle section of the road will be built – if at all – because no-one knows when it will suit the whim or wallet of some developer or other.

It was not always like this. In the past, central government accepted its responsibilities for key local infrastructure. Had it not done so in the 1980s, we should have had no eastern bypass, with the centre of Spalding destroyed, smashed about to try to accommodate the snarled-up juggernauts of the A16. It was Kenneth Clark, then Minister of Transport, who found the money, following his meeting at the House of Commons with a combined deputation from the Civic Society and the District Council. [Page 3 ►



**For the diary**

Unveiling of Plaque  
to

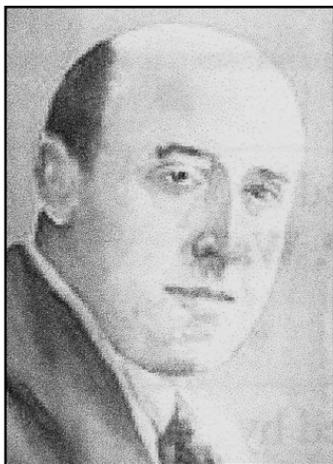
**George Shepherd, First Baron  
Spalding**

by his great-grandson, Patrick Shepherd

**Sat., 20 July, 11 am 4 New Road, Spalding**

GEORGE ROBERT SHEPHERD (1881-1954), 1st Baron Shepherd of Spalding, was born at 4 New Road, where his father was a tailor and lived above the shop (now the Mobile Centre). He was educated locally and by the age of 19 had become the manager of a shoe shop in Bradford.

His marriage in 1915 to Ada Newton, who was an active trade unionist and campaigner for women’s rights with the support of Quaker families such as the Cadburys and Rowntrees, no doubt influenced his becoming a conscientious objector during the First World War and strengthened his involvement with the Labour movement. He was Assistant National Agent for the Labour Party from 1924 to 1929 and then National Agent until 1946. When Sir Winston Churchill requested that Clement Attlee and the Labour Party enter into a wartime coalition, it was Shepherd who negotiated the terms of this all-important agreement, and he was in charge of the party agents nationwide when Labour swept into government in 1945. He was raised to the peerage in 1946 as Baron Shepherd of Spalding, becoming one of the first Labour peers in the House of Lords, serving as party whip until 1951.



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## SOCIETY NOTES

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A WARM WELCOME to new members Nigel Chapman and Andrew Hill.

The 2019 AGM was held in the Spalding Grammar School Business Centre on 12 March. Reports were presented from the Chairman, the Treasurer and the Planning and Projects & Campaigns sub-committees. John Bland was elected Chairman and Melvyn Price and Marian Boxall re-elected Treasurer and Secretary respectively. Committee: Marion Brassington, John Charlesworth, Andrew Hill, David Jones, Paul Walls, Pat Wensor and Robert West. David Jones was thanked for ably carrying out the exacting rôle of Chairman for the past four years, even though latterly not in the best of health. We wish him a steady recovery.

The formal proceedings were followed by an illustrated talk on ‘Protecting South Holland’s Heritage’ from Ian Marshman, LCC Historic Environment Officer. (*Report on p.6.*) Unfortunately, the display from the Gentlemen’s Society collection of documents and artefacts on the scandalous demolition of Holyrood House (1959) did not materialise, owing to crossed wires over the date of the AGM.

We are most grateful to Graeme Shepherd, the Third Baron Spalding, who on a flying visit to this country presented the Society with a donation of £2000; and he was delighted to be invited to become an Honorary Life Member of the Society. The blue plaque to his grandfather, the First Baron, who was born and grew up in Spalding, will be unveiled on Saturday, 20 July, 11.00 am at 4 New Road.

We are also very grateful to have received a donation of £100 from Rex Sly (*pp.4&5*) to “kickstart” the next stages of the Market Art Project – “A great achievement by all involved,” he said.

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◀ *Page 2*] We have tried. Perhaps, with hindsight, when they were examining the new Local Plan last autumn, we should have confronted the inspectors face-to-face with the kind of absurdity that can result from leaving it to developers to finance local infrastructure.

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With the Local Plan now adopted, views have been sought on two possible alignments for the central section of the road, which may or may not be built. The Civic Society responded that it is essential the road is completed long before 2036 (when the Local Plan expires); and that it does not demolish people’s homes. Thus, we suggested an alternative route: the northern section to continue alongside the Vernatt’s to Podge Hole, to meet a southern section, aligned with South Drove.

Now that Sir John Hayes is seeking to have the proposals ‘called in’ for a decision at government level, we hope the opportunity can also be taken to bring home to the Minister the folly of the present system of financing key local infrastructure. Two roads to nowhere and a phantom between.

**Planning Sub-Committee**



Nigel Chapman

## THE HIRING

*“A great achievement by all involved” – Rex Sly*

6 MAY 2019. The weather was fine. The music was jolly. The microphone iffy. The crowd about 70. The speakers were ready. The day of the long-delayed unveiling of Laury Dizengremel’s sculpture had arrived.

Our partner Nick Jones, Transported’s Programme Director, placed the Market Art Project in the wider context of the Creative People and Places programme, funded by Arts Council England, which sets out to bring local people into closer contact with the arts.

John Charlesworth, the Society’s Projects Officer, spoke of the fascinating opportunity he and member John Honnor had had to follow the evolution of *The Hiring* through from the sculpture’s initial clay version, via the pouring of the molten metal, to the burnishing of the completed bronze. “In truth,” he said, “I was rather in awe of Laury, though I did

manage to pluck up courage to suggest a watch-chain for the farmer and John got the shepherd’s wellies changed to gaiters and boots.” And he went on to outline the further sculptures and mosaics of farm animals envisaged by the project.

After a hiring fair song from Kim and Phil Biggs of the Spalding Folk Club, Councillor Elizabeth Sneath, SHDC Heritage Champion, congratulated the Society on its contribution to increasing the attractiveness of the town centre and hoped there would be more to come.

Finally, it was Rex Sly’s turn, farmer and author of several books on the history of South Holland’s fens and its people. He reminded us of the area’s long history of outsiders ..... Dutch drainage engineers, Irish dyke diggers and harvesters, Italian internees on the farms and German POWs helping to build the post-war housing estates, and more recently the field and factory workers from Eastern Europe. And he stressed the great social value of local markets. “When a town loses its market,” he said, “it loses its soul.” And he drew the covering away.

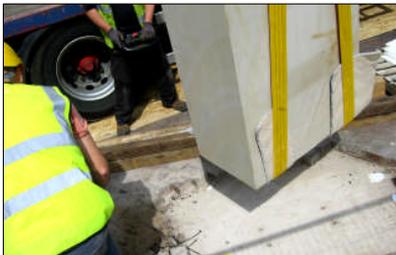
*The Hiring* was at last unveiled.

Member Nigel Chapman circulated amongst the

crowd to hear what people thought. “I think it’s part of our history. It’s a lovely idea and enhances the town,” said Carol Branton. “I’m absolutely delighted with it,” said Heather Violett. “As a member of the Spalding Gentlemen’s Society I really do like to see and feel our past celebrated as much as possible.”

Other comments: “I think it’s fantastic” (David Jones – no relation! – who moved to the area about ten years ago and said he is about to join the Society). “It’s very appropriate. I think it’s good to see” (Judith Smith). “The facial expressions are excellent. I’m very much impressed with the detail. The idea of artwork in the town centre is an extremely good one” (Brita Green, York).

Farmer and shepherd freed at last, after their many months hobbled in red tape, to feel the open air, its sun and wind and rain, amid the strutting pigeons, and the bustle and buying of the market.



Spalding Folk Club



Brita Green

From left: Rex Sly, Nick Jones (Transported), John Bland (Chairman), Coun. Elizabeth Sneath, John Charlesworth (Projects Officer), David Jones (Vice-Chairman).



Nigel Chapman

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# HIRING FAIRS

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HIRING FAIRS were held early in May. 150 years ago Rex Sly might have been hiring a young shepherd in the same week and on the same spot in the same transaction as he was now unveiling in bronze. The Hall Place photograph below shows the Spalding Hiring Fair in 1908.



Reproduced by kind permission of Spalding Gentlemen's Society

The picture is, however, a bit of a puzzle. Almost all accounts of hiring fairs mention the tokens of their particular skill that each worker carried or wore: “Carters and waggoners were distinguished by having a piece of whip-cord twisted round their hats; thatchers wore a fragment of woven straw; shepherds held their sheep-crooks in their hands” (Thomas Hardy: *Far from the Madding Crowd*).

Mary Webb gives an even fuller picture in her novel *Precious Bane* :- “The long row of young folks, and some not so young, who were there to be hired, began near our stall. Each one carried a sign of his trade or hers. A cook had a big wooden spoon, and if the young fellows were too gallus [cheeky] she'd smack them over the head with the flat of it. Men that went with teams [of horses] had whips, hedgers a brummock [billhook], gardeners a spade. Cowmen carried a bright tin pail, thatchers a bundle of straw. A blacksmith wore a horseshoe in his hat .....

Shepherds had a crook and bailiffs a lanthorn, to show how late they'd be out and about after robbers .....

It is surprising, therefore, that there is no trace in the photograph of a tin pail, shepherd's crook or big wooden spoon, etc., to be seen amongst the people offering themselves for employment. Except, perhaps, for the young man at the front, who may have horse trappings hanging down from his neck. (The downcast eyes and loosely hanging arms suggest someone uncomfortable at being weighed up by the older men in front of him.)

The *Spalding Free Press* used to report the going-rate for various skills. In 1907 it was: “ploughboys £5 to £8, horsemen £8 to £10, house-maids £10 to £15, plain cooks £16 to £18”, and so on – just as it reported the livestock prices in the paragraph before.

[Thanks to Martin Blake for finding this photograph for one of his monthly columns in the local press and to Heather Violett and Marion Brassington of the Gentlemen's Society.]



## THE GREAT LEVEL

by  
Stella Tillyard

DUTCHMAN Jan Brunt arrives in England in 1649 to join Vermuyden’s team of engineers setting out to drain the vast tract of marsh and fen encircled by Peterborough, Crowland, Wisbech and Ely – the Great Level of the title. To the young engineer the uncertainties of mud and peat, shifting channels and low islands that appear and disappear with the seasons are an offence, to be mapped and measured, surveyed and disciplined, tamed by drain, embankment and sluice. The water must be taught to flow directly to the Wash, and the wilderness to harvest oats and barley. Untamed, it’s a world vividly called up by the writer – “Feet first, a flight of ducks skids in”, “Black nets of starlings shrink and billow from tree to tree” – in words as clean and sharp as a delft tile.

Just as uncertain and alien to Jan as the land are the wildmen of this wilderness, silent and elusive in their coracles, disappearing into the reeds or silhouetted in the distance against their night-fishing lanterns. Always and everywhere, the pervasive, uneasy feeling of being watched by unseen eyes.

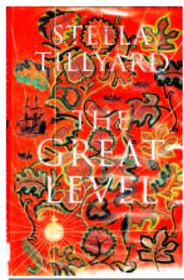
But the growing love between Jan and fen-woman Eliza is overwhelmed when the marshmen devastatingly undo the engineers’ works in all too fitting a way. Jan emigrates to the New World, where he finds his drainage skills are as much in demand as before. Then one spring morning in 1664 a boy delivers a mysterious note that prompts him to remember the Great Level and all that was lost there.

I’d known, generally, about the 17<sup>th</sup> century drainage of the fens and about Cromwell’s Commonwealth and his ruthless campaigns in Ireland and Scotland but, unthinkingly, never put the two together. Still less had I thought about where on earth the draggled and starved manpower could have come from to dig out the channels and raise the embankments. I learnt a lot.

In short, a novel that is both engrossing and enlightening.

**John Charlesworth**

(Stella Tillyard: *The Great Level* (Chatto & Windus, 2018, Bookmark £12.99). Also available from the Library.



## Protecting South Holland’s Heritage

HOWEVER COLD AND WET it was on the night of the AGM (p.3), it was warmed up inside the Grammar School’s Business Centre by the bounding energy and enthusiasm of Ian Marshman talking about his work as LCC Historic Environment Officer. We were left in no doubt that protecting South Holland’s heritage is not just a matter of “looking after old things”.

For a start, all known archaeological and historic sites in the county are logged in the *Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record*, from Stone Age burial sites via historic buildings and battlefields to 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial sites. The computerised database holds over 30,000 records, including aerial photographs from the 1940s onwards and thousands of archaeological reports; there is also a large library of local books and journals. Everyone is welcome to use the *Record*.

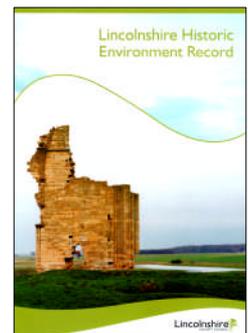
Hands-on work includes archaeological digs – for example, test trenches along the line of the proposed Spalding Western Relief Road, where nothing at all was found, except near the Pinchbeck Road, where there is “lots of stuff”.

The recording of historic buildings often turns up interesting material that tells a story of earlier ways of life. Carved graffiti on a stable door, for example: someone’s initials, a horse’s head, a bicycle. The initials are not of any of the known families of the farm, but fit the owners of a neighbouring farm; and one pictures one of the neighbour’s lads, with time on his hands, having come over on an errand, looking in on the horses and dreaming of the bicycle he’d like to have or has recently acquired.

The heritage staff have just begun an “extensive urban survey” of Lincolnshire towns, with Holbeach as the pilot. This will result in a series of overlay maps showing how the town grew and developed over the centuries. The survey will go on to include Spalding and Crowland.

And comments are made on planning applications if there is something of historical significance, such as the mews development proposed for Broad Street, which lies between two listed buildings; and Ian has given formal support to *The Hiring* and the forthcoming blue plaque.

With such variety who wouldn’t bubble with enthusiasm for his job – even on a cold wet evening in March?





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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
		23	24	25	26	27

# 2020 Calendar

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Are there unseen gems lurking in your computer or smart-phone? Or maybe you'd like to take your camera out to one of the villages you've not been to for a while? Why not?

After our well-received calendar for 2018, we're planning another for 2020, showing Spalding and nearby villages or countryside at their best or most interesting, and would like to include photographs taken by members or their friends or family. Crowland, Moulton, Surfleet, Pinchbeck, not just Spalding. And not just churches! Other historic buildings, sweeping views with dramatic skies, interesting details. Pictures with a clear seasonal feel would be particularly welcome: snow, daffodils, harvest. But they should not have been previously published. (The above are just examples.)

Landscape format, please, with an indication of where taken and contact details. They can be submitted as prints or electronically via email or on a disk or memory stick. Send to: **John Bland, 36 Park Avenue, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QX** Email: [johnrgbland@gmail.com](mailto:johnrgbland@gmail.com) Closing date: **31 July**.

With your help we should be able to produce a really attractive calendar for 2020.

## 'IS TED COMING OUT TO PLAY?'

"Since the 1950s, 80 per cent of the population in the UK have lived in towns and cities, but only a generation ago 40 per cent of children still regularly played in natural areas. This has dropped to 10 per cent today, with 40 per cent of children never playing outdoors at all. When I was a child, it was normal to cycle miles from home to meet up with friends. Weekends were spent scavenging on waste ground and gravel pits, damming streams, building dens, making camp fires, swimming in rivers and ponds – none of it under adult supervision. Today's children, even if they live in the countryside, are under almost constant surveillance, protected from the perils of adventure and independence ..... In 1971, 80 per cent of eight- and nine-year-olds walked to school alone. By 1990 this had dropped to 9 per cent and now it is even lower."

**Isabella Tree: *Wilding* (Picador, 2018)**

### 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 .....

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# MUCH APPRECIATED

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- **St.Mary & St.Nicolas Church** for its lovely annual sea of daffodils in March.
- **LCC** for this year's particularly spectacular display of pear blossom outside the Magistrates Court.
- **Chain Bridge Forge** for the new ornamental railings – not only a safety measure, but also a piece of public art.
- **SHDC Parks Department** for the attractive three-dimensional planting outside the Council Offices.
- **Broad Street Methodist Church** ditto, showing how a bit of 3D thinking enormously increases the impact of small planters.
- **SHDC** for the outdoors gym championed by Councillors **Christine Lawton** and **Roger Gambba-Jones** at Hayfields in their ward.
- **Bakkavor** for the exemplary maintenance of its long hedge boundary along West Marsh Road.
- **J.Hodgson & Son, Sleaford**, for the repair of the damaged White Hart portico column.

- **Peter Boekestyn and friends** for their general clean-up of the neglected Vernatt's Nature Reaserve.

## Much Appreciated, But .....

- **SHDC** for replacing the vandalised cycle-stand at the start of the Hole-in-the-Wall Passage ..... but one wonders why it has taken three or more years.
- **SHDC** for the black-and-gold smartening up of the street furniture in the town centre, meticulously done [*bottom right*]..... except in the Market Place [*bottom centre*], where the brushwork is slapdash and slipshod.

## Not Appreciated

- **The first occupant** of the first of the three new shops in Winsover Road, whose first action was to blank out the shop windows with vinyl.
- **SHDC** for allowing parked vehicles in the middle of the Hall Place circle on market days, so destroying a social space on the very days its potential social value to both market and town is at its greatest.



Clockwise from top left:  
Council Offices; Hole-in-the-Wall Passage, before and after;  
Priory Road; Market Place;  
Winsover Road.

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