



SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2020

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

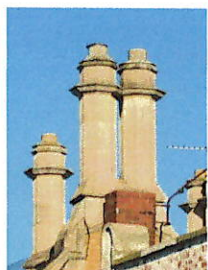
BONMARCHÉ, M&S Foods, Beale's – potential store closures that could have an adverse impact on the town, especially the two stores in the Market Place. We've also seen Ye Olde White Horse close its doors. There has been no doubt that the announcements have focussed minds on how to ensure that our town centre not only adapts to the challenges facing town centres everywhere, but also that we as a town come up with a plan that will enable the town to thrive. With the recent commitment by South Holland District Council to involve the Society and other community groups in the consultation process, I am hopeful that we can find ways of involving the wider community in these discussions, and that we can end up with a unique solution that will make people want to come to Spalding simply *because it is Spalding*.

The last few months have not all been grim though. All credit to the District Council for a far better Christmas tree this year, and to Lincolnshire County Council for at last addressing the concerns that many had over the route of the Spalding Western Relief Road. In addition, our 2020 calendar sold out. Do tell us what you think of it and share your views as to what theme we might consider for next year.

Nationally it was good to see the President of Civic Voice, Griff Rees-Jones, receive an OBE for services to the National Civic Movement, who said it was a recognition of the work of all civic societies. Civic Voice, which leads the civic society movement of 252 societies, have a plan for 2020 to enhance the rights that communities have in the planning system and will be campaigning for a formal right for civic societies to have a voice at every stage of the planning system. To make this work, civic societies must lead the way in being an inclusive, independent and an inspirational voice for the future of our towns. The question we need to ask is whether, by being at the heart of the community, we can help to rebuild public trust in the planning system? I hope so.

2020 will be a year of new opportunities. We have been assured a place in the town centre improvement consultation set out in the recent *Holbeach and Spalding Town Centre Improvement Works* (see p.4), and I want the Society to take full advantage of that opportunity by being the catalyst for public engagement in that process. We have a Facebook page up and running now, and I want to use that as a vehicle for provoking discussion about the future of the town and bringing a fresh generation of new members into the Society. If you are reading this newsletter and would like to have your say in how we should stand up for the townsfolk of Spalding, do come along to our AGM on 17 March and join us as a member.

John Bland.



QUIZ

For the diary

- Suitable for everyone •
- However long or short you've been in Spalding •
- No historical knowledge required •
- Just good observation •

**Make up a team (4) with your friends or family
or just come along and join in the fun anyway.**

Refreshments

Tuesday, 4 February, 7.30 £5 St.Norbert's Church Hall

PLANNING MATTERS

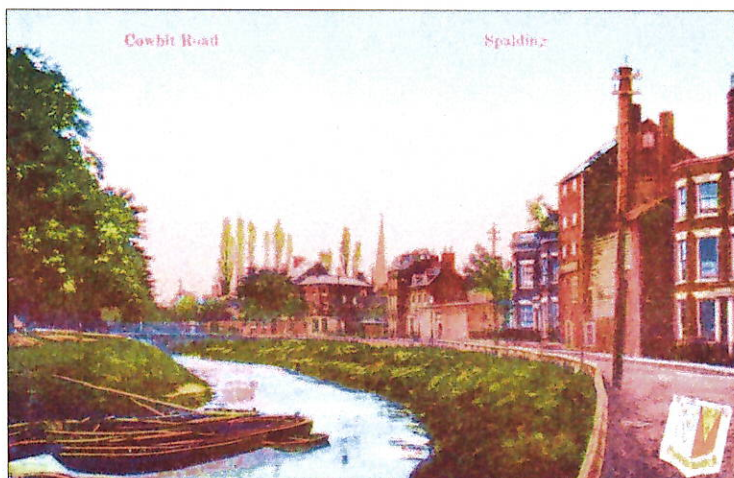
THE GOOD NEWS is that the threatened loss of nearly half the Severn Road Playing Field has been removed. Given Spalding's dire shortfall of green recreational space, it was always shocking that Welland Homes (the Council's housing arm) should apply to bury a further portion of it under bricks and concrete. The introduction of much more exacting flood risk criteria, however, have made such development unviable, and the application has been withdrawn. So the field is safe – certainly for the immediate future and, one hopes, for very much longer than that.

Not many planning applications are coming in for buildings in Spalding at the moment. However, we can report on work that is taking place. The housing development on Law's Yard is taking shape; the houses will never win an award for imaginative architecture, but at least they are being built. There are other locations in Spalding where there is nothing happening at all. I hardly need to name them.

Work is also under way on the installation of passenger lifts at Spalding railway station. They will be particularly useful for disabled and heavily-laden passengers needing to get from Platform 2 to the station exit. Absurdly, they currently have to continue on the train to Sleaford and then travel back to Spalding on the next train southwards, not much use after early afternoon, and Platform 2 is needed more since the introduction of more freight trains. It is pleasing to see the care being taken with the use of matching brickwork – just as we were happy to see the building opposite, which houses Sainsbury's, also using similarly coloured bricks and with features reflecting the architecture of the station.

The work to trees on the river bank has provoked some controversy. I don't have a view on this work. An earlier notorious example of tree work – this time badly timed – was when the large willow next to High Bridge was cut back severely just before a Tulip Parade day, but it has recovered well, as willows do. A number of roadside trees have disappeared in recent years, some on the river bank, one on West Elloe Avenue that was completely dead and one that has been left as just a trunk, not to mention several on the Balmoral and Acacia Avenue estates. At a time when even President Trump is talking about planting trees, we need to think of our stock of trees around Spalding. It is doubtful whether a forest development would be suitable on our Grade A agricultural land, but trees could be added in town. It is good to see that the Council Leader, Lord Porter, has been in talks with the Woodland Trust. I would welcome members' ideas as to where trees are needed in Spalding.

We are concerned that the Spalding Gateway development south of the town is starting to deviate from what was initially proposed – i.e. "business premises, conference centre, and distribution centre for major international food and technology manufacturers" (Ashwood Homes, 2018). They have tried to put housing on an adjoining site not zoned for housing, and it now seems the long-mooted drive-through KFC may end up there. The danger is that this will develop into a retail area, thus harming an already suffering town centre by removing any need to visit it. This must not be allowed to happen. We are keeping a watchful eye. **David Jones.**



The selection this time comes from member Pat Wensor's collection of picture post-cards, some over a century old.

Cowbit Road (postmarked 1912). The tall warehouse and chimney were part of Soames's Brewery (later taken over by Steward & Patteson, then by Watney Mann, although brewing had ceased by 1949). On the brewery's town side is the bow-fronted Westbourne House and on the other Langton House, both of which remain.. The barges or wherries on the river would have taken goods unloaded from sea-going vessels below High Bridge upstream as far as Stamford.



SPALDING

The Olde White Horse (postmarked 1952). From the left: Garwell's corn and flour merchant's, the White Horse & Isobel's Pantry, Johnson's ironmonger's, and the little Bull Inn. The tall riverbank building facing them was another shop owned by Johnson's. All gone now, except for the White Horse and its neighbour, left high and dry like contextless museum exhibits instead of nestling into a cosy neighbourhood as here – sacrificed in the 60s to road widening and car parking space...The recently-installed ugly metal footbridge can just be seen bottom right. .



The Market Place (about 1950). Most noticeable is the ornate lighting installation, also incorporating a public water pump. There has been a pump at that spot since Georgian times. The Market Inspector's hut was a recent feature, only removed in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Businesses on the left include Boot's and the Midland Bank (now HSBC), the run of imposing Victorian and Edwardian frontages interrupted by the more recent Art Deco style above Burton's shop.

Pat Wensor

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

SOLD OUT

OUR CALENDAR FOR 2020 turned out to be even more popular than our first venture two years ago, with people still looking for copies to buy in late January, long after Bookmark, Spalding News and the Society had exhausted their stock. One feature some purchasers particularly liked was the snippet of information that accompanied each photograph.

In view of the success, we are already considering a calendar for 2021. The idea is to show the area at its most attractive and/or interesting – not just Spalding but also surrounding villages and landscapes. And we want to be able to include contributions from a wider range of members (or their families) than last time.

So here is the invitation. • **Do take your camera or smart phone out with you when you're out and about.** • **Do have an eye for possible shots for next year's calendar.** • **Especially where they have a seasonal feel.** • **Do think widely (winter sunset? market? flower festival? working the land?).** • **Don't be shy or over-modest about the results.** Details about sending in your photographs in the June Newsletter.



THE WARMEST of warm welcomes to *Holbeach and Spalding Town Centre Improvement Works* – if only it wasn't such a mouthful! In the absence of a snappier title, we'll call it *The Report* simply.

Spalding has a potentially very attractive town centre – especially with the river only a stone's throw away from the Market Place – but most people would probably agree that it hasn't been making the best of itself for some years. *The Report*, however, now declares a clear resolve to take matters in hand, with a structure and £500,000 of Council cash over three years to achieve it, or at least get it launched. An appendix sets out a list of particular 'works'. *The Report* was unanimously approved by the Council.

The Set-Up

In short, for the first time in many years, instead of responsibilities scattered all over the place in Priory Road, there will be particular elected members and officers with a specific remit to regenerate the town centre – something for which the Society has been calling for ages, submitting ideas and detailed suggestions as well.

Now there will be a Project Officer (shared with Holbeach) to co-ordinate projects and seek out further possible funding. The Spalding side of things will be led by Deputy Council Leader Gary Taylor. Crucially, there will be a Spalding Town Centre Steering Group to "help shape and develop the [regeneration] plan" during the next three years. It will consist mainly of "community and business representatives". **We have been assured the Society will be included amongst them.**

It is vital that the Steering Group is not a mere rubber-stamping device for top-down plans prepared within Priory Road but is clearly a body that can originate proposals and is receptive to grass-roots ideas. We look forward to being able to make a contribution to its working that is constructive, informed and inventive.

A Vision

Is it really too much to envisage a town centre free of vinyl-blanked shop windows and neglected first floors, and where market days are alive with music and entertainment in the social space of Hall

THE REPORT

Place's seating circle, with the planters overflowing with flowers and the market stalls facing onto it instead of turning their scruffy backs to it? And the Market Place presided over by the striking dignity of a reinstated Johnson Drinking Fountain and full of people drawn by a weekly on-the-stones auction?

New year new ideas No-one should feel that their thoughts for the town are too ambitious or imaginative. There's already grass-roots talk on the grapevine of a regatta or water festival on the river. After all, the Tulip Parade must have seemed a pretty audacious idea once upon a time.

A First Step

Earlier, independently of *The Report* and before it had appeared, the Society and our partner Transported Arts had decided it would be useful to try to draft a public art strategy for Spalding to set the Market Art Project in a wider context – with a think-tank or workshop arranged for Saturday, 15 February. This should now mean that, when the Spalding Town Centre Steering Group is set up, the Society will have a clearly thought-out set of proposals to put to the Group. There'll be two or three from Transported and about a dozen from the Society. There's still room for one or two more members to join the workshop. It's not a forum of 'experts', just people with a strong desire to see the town make more of itself, a one-off chance to voice ideas and share experience of some of the delightful things you've come across in other towns. (*See below, and p.7 for contact details.*) And we hope others will slip into the South Holland Centre between 4.00 and 5.00 the same afternoon to hear and comment on what the think-tankers have come up during their hectic three hours previously and will add their own thought-provoking spice to the mix.

With the imminent closure of Bon Marché, M&S Food Store and Beale's we need to recreate a town centre that is handsome, lively and making the best of itself, a *town* (not just a retail outlet on the outskirts) that people will want to visit for these reasons and where residents won't feel the call to buzz off to Boston or Peterborough. It will need the input of all of us and, as *The Report* puts it, "outstanding, talented and committed leadership". An opportunity that has not come our way before.

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To Draft a Public Art Strategy for Spalding

Saturday, 15 February, South Holland Centre 12.30 (lunch) - Think Tank - 4.00 – 5.00 (public session)

To strengthen Spalding's distinctive character, creating a strong sense of place, somewhere special.

CONSERVATION AREA ?

IT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT to think so. First it was Anglian Water with its spiked industrial palisading. Then the demolition of a historic feature by some hit-and-stagger-away motorist. And now garish blue splurges in front of electrical vehicles charging-points.



For Anglian Water, one industrialised stockade fits all places where there's the slightest

smidgeon of a risk, regardless of context – conservation area, listed building or whatever. This is only possible because utilities have so-called “permitted development” rights, and therefore do not have to submit planning applications. Clearly the existing planning regulations need changing to require utilities to consult the local authority where their proposals affect a conservation area or the setting of a listed building, in order to arrive at a sensitive and mutually acceptable solution.

The historic lantern column outside the Johnson Hospital in Priory Road was apparently brought down by a vehicle running or reversing into it. The police received no accident report. Presumably the owners of the Johnson – an off-shore company registered in the Bahamas – know about it, as the people they employ sporadically to work on the site moved the fragmented stonework to act as makeshift bollards and removed the elaborate cast-iron upper part – no-one knows where. Given the continuing



neglect of the building, it is unlikely the owners will bother to do anything further. It is difficult to believe there were no witnesses of what would have been a quite noisy few moments. The Society would be glad to receive any information. Or there is the Planning Enforcement Team at the Council Offices in Priory Road, who would receive information in confidence.

It is good to see the Council installing electrical charging-points in its car parks. We are, however, concerned about the garish blue splurges and the prospect of more such splurges springing up all over the district. Two of the stations so far installed in



Spalding are in the Conservation Area! It is completely unnecessary. *There is no national requirement to colour the bays.* The bright white charging-points themselves stand out clearly. And other local authorities just have the symbol stencilled onto existing surfaces. Or there is a simple paving slab (+ symbol) about 70cm x 70cm that can be let into the block paving. After all, simple symbols on their own work well enough to indicate parking spaces reserved for disabled people and mothers-with-toddlers. (We are still trying to find out who to speak to on the matter, the buck having been passed on four times to date.)

NEXT

BLUE PLAQUE will commemorate Charlotte Charinton (1801-88), a local benefactress. Having inherited the whole of her father's estate, she financed the building of St. Paul's Church, Fulney, its vicarage (both Grade I listed in 2008) and school room, as well as helping with the restoration of many other churches in the district. Despite her great wealth, she lived modestly in Spalding at 11 Welland Terrace. [Page 7 ►]

ROBIN'S RETURN

ANYONE doing research touching on 19th century Spalding – whether family history or more generally – will almost certainly have come across references to *Notices of Remarkable Events and Curious Facts with Various Interesting Scraps connected with the History and Antiquities of Spalding in the County of Lincoln and the Places Adjacent, Collected and Treasured in Memory* by ‘Old Robin Harmstone’, 1846. (Old Robin was a digger of both wells and graves by trade and claims at one point to have borne 59 persons to their graves.) The “places adjacent” range from Wyberton to Tydd St.Mary.

It is a slim little volume printed and published in Spalding in the 1840s, its yellowing pages full of the sort of random snippets its title promises. • In 1691 there were only five “Public Houses, Inns and Taverns” in the town, whereas there are “now about 80 Ale and Liquor Retailers”. • As late as 1787 Quarter Sessions magistrates might order felons to be flogged or to stand in the stocks, “a wooden frame upon four wheels ... called the white willy”. • Clay Hall was so named by the builder, “his wife’s maiden name being ‘Clay’”. • “The first person who possessed an umbrella in Spalding was the grandfather of Henry Hawkes, Esq.”

Quite a number of the snippets record when particular houses and shops were built and who their present owners were. One gets the impression that Robin Harmstone knew just about everybody in Spalding – of the better sort at any rate – through gossip and the services he provided.

He is very precise about dates and people’s ages. So precise that, perversely, one begins to wonder about their accuracy, as he provides no sources. For example, of the five monks left in the run-down Crowland monastery by the mid-tenth century, we’re told: “Clarenbald ... died in the year 973 aged 168 years. Swarting died in the year 974 aged 142. Brue and Aio in the same year. Thurgar died in the year 975 aged 115 years.” Turketyl, who had looked after them, died the following year “aged 68 years”.

As a result, accurate though most of it may be, particularly relating to the author’s own time, one can never feel completely confident about any particular piece of information.

Nevertheless, in all its quirky oddity it is a fascinating little book – and rare. The Library has a copy (behind locked glass); also the Gentlemen’s Society. Ayscoughfee Museum produced a transcribed edition in 1996, but this sold out long ago.

It is a great boon, therefore, that member Nancy Snowdon has republished it, making it readily available again to dip into or to offer leads for local historians, particularly of late 18th century and early 19th century Spalding.

Harmstone published at least two editions, in 1846 and 1848; and there are differences between the two. In 1846, for example, we read that “The last man that was hung [in Spalding, 1742] was William Tyler, for the murder of Mrs.Ives in the house now occupied by Mr.Samuel Beech.” In 1848, however, it is “the public house (the Bee Hive) now occupied by M.Samuel Cotton”. (Perhaps the new owner didn’t mind its being known that his house was once a pub.) But there are much larger differences. The first edition covers thirteen villages; the second has five extra. So if you want to find out about Weston, Moulton, Whaplode, Holbeach or Kirton, it’s the 1848 edition in the Spalding Library you’ll need to consult.

Sadly, however, the new edition is not quite all that it seems. It is a reprinting of the 1996 Ayscoughfee Museum version. And that, despite its title, is neither an accurate nor a complete transcription of Harmstone’s original 1846 book. For example, nine of the thirteen villages have been left out, as has his tailpiece to “young readers”. Yet there is no mention anywhere that it is not the complete text.

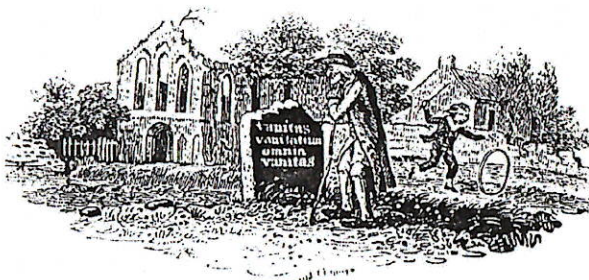
What would be really nice would be a complete and accurate edition of the 1846 text, perhaps with reproductions of one or two of Hilkieah Burgess’s contemporary watercolours.

Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings, it’s good to have most of the 1846 edition available again – a touching and imaginative ‘in memoriam’. Thank you, Nancy Snowdon. [Available at Bookmark for £3.99 – all proceeds to charity.]

John Charlesworth

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The Great Level by Sheila Tillyard – reviewed in the June Newsletter – is now out in paperback at £8.99. (Bookmark with discount: £6.99.)





plus

For the diary

**SPALDING GRAMMAR
SCHOOL**

BUSINESS CENTRE *

**Tuesday, 17 March
7.30 pm**

250 Years of Local News

Illustrated talk by

David Jacobs

News stories about Spalding and surrounding villages
found in newspapers from America, Canada, Australia
and around the UK from the 18th century to 1970.

Funny, sad, strange, gruesome.

Everything from bomb-throwing schoolboys
to naked cricket, and a vicar refereeing women's wrestling,
and a lot more in between.

* From the carpark walk up the long ramp, then straight ahead down the steps. The Business Centre is slightly further on, to the left.

◀ *Page 5*] It may well be wondered at this point why there is no plaque for the Johnson sisters yet, considering their contribution to the town's well-being in the later part of the nineteenth century. The answer is that they are on the back burner at the moment. When the Johnson Memorial Drinking Fountain is restored to the town centre, which we hope will not be too long delayed, that would be the ideal site at which to record the debt the town owes to these two generous and public-spirited ladies.

Public Art Strategy Workshop

Contact Details

David Jones: Tel. 01775 766145, email

davidjones2da@hotmail.com

John Charlesworth: Tel. 01775 768303

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The workshop is a one-off event. There is no commitment to anything more, unless you would like to be further involved, when you would be very welcome.

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

- **The Lincoln Arms** for its smartening-up repaint.
 - **The Real Pharm Shop** in Station Street for removing the obliterating vinyl from its windows to display its goods. A lead we hope other shops will follow.
 - All the shops that made a real effort with their Christmas window-dressing, particularly **Ring-rose Law** (building on their pumpkin-time award) and, again outstanding, **Hill's Department Store** (with its Venetian Carnival theme).
 - The **Spotless Spalding** group for extending its activities beyond litter-picks to graffiti removal.
 - **SHDC** for getting the slipshod repainting of the Market Place litter bins repainted to the high standard of the rest.
 - **SHDC** for decking the Christmas tree in *coloured* lights this time and not marring its perfect shape with a grotty plastic skirt.
 - **The Lincolnshire Free Press** for now including the code numbers in their weekly lists of planning applications, making them so very much easier to look up on the Council's web-site.
- (The last three items followed recommendations from the Society.)*

SOCIETY NOTES

We are saddened to record the death last October of Carol Burton, one of the Society's earliest members and its minutes secretary for a number of years. A member also of the Society of Friends, Carol was never afraid to speak up, whether against militarism in all its forms or, closer to home, in support of Neal French's delightful family-group sculpture at Saracen's Head, when one or two people wrote to the local press to sneer at the sculptor's stylised approach to his subject.

The Treasurer **would like to remind existing members who pay by cheque that it is time to renew your subscriptions by filling in the form on p.7 or printing it out and sending it to him with your subscription.** Address: **Melvyn Price, 3 Morus Close, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2QL.** If you have copies of the Society's brochure (maroon) for recruiting new members, it would be helpful if you could revise Melvyn's address.

The Arts Council's new 10-year strategy hopes to win government backing for a change

of direction away from the big prestigious national institutions such as the National Theatre and the Royal Ballet and more towards towns, villages and grassroots. It sees a stronger rôle for itself in "building the identity and prosperity of places", bringing professional artists together with voluntary groups, particularly in areas that have previously not been well represented on the cultural map. Now, they couldn't have been thinking of the Society's Market Art Project by any chance, could they?

Our friends in the Spalding Photographic Society have held their annual exhibition in Ayscoughfee Hall for some years now, but as it is unavailable this year, they are looking for an alternative venue for this year, preferably in the town centre. If you have a good idea, please let either David Jones or John Charlesworth know, and they will pass it on to the Photographic Society. We hope many of you will have dropped into the Library or the Red Lion Quarter and seen some of their marvellous photographs in smaller exhibitions during the past year.

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Website www.spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk

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