

SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2017

DECISIONS, DECISIONS ...

WE are shortly to be asked again **if we want a Town Council**. Or, rather, whether we want SHDC to “explore the possibility” of one (*The Voice*, 26 January). At the moment, Spalding is uniquely disadvantaged. Alone, of all the other towns and villages in South Holland, we have no town or parish council. That is: no elected body or budget to decide on the town’s particular interests. Holbeach and Pinchbeck able to manage their own affairs, so why not Spalding? (The Town Forum is only advisory.) Instead, we have to share the District budget with the rest of South Holland, but at the same time risk being accused of taking more than our fair share.

But the question is far more urgent than it was in 1998, when we were asked before. That is because of another question, which the *County Council* will be asking us to vote on in May: **Do we want to scrap the county council itself and all the seven district councils and to replace them by one huge council for the whole of Lincolnshire** (i.e. become a ‘unitary authority’)?

At present, responsibilities are divided between the County and the District. Roads and social services, for example, come under the County Council; planning applications and refuse collection under the District. It’s a system that has produced some quite crazy situations, with seats and bollards in Hall Place maintained by the County and those in the Market Place by the District. For waste disposal and recycling, the County runs the West March Road depot and the District the weekly collections. Whoever, starting from scratch, would come up with a system like this? On the face of it, therefore, it seems obvious good sense to bring all functions of local government together into one coherent and understandable unitary authority.

And yet ... and yet do we really want councillors from Gainsborough and Mablethorpe to be dictating how often our refuse is collected, or local planning applications decided by distant

officers in Lincoln familiar with neither our streets nor our needs and aspirations? Remote and unaccountable? Is Lincolnshire, in fact, too large to be governed centrally? Places distant from the seat of government can feel ignored or neglected. One need only note the provision for cyclists: it is far better in Lincoln than in Spalding.

It is absolutely vital, therefore, that we see these two questions in relation to each other when we vote. Suppose, for example, Spalding people reject a town council and the county opts for a single unitary authority. In that case there will be nothing between us and Lincoln, almost no-one to speak for and look out for Spalding, just four councillors amongst 77, running up huge petrol bills incidentally for more frequent meetings in Lincoln.

Or is there perhaps a middle way? A town council to look after our immediate and particular concerns and three or four smaller unitary authorities, more accessible and accountable, for wider matters such as roads and social services?

And will this option be offered on the county ballot paper? It matters.

There are all sorts of other questions, too. How much more (or less) might a unitary authority cost? Will there be economies of scale? Will a town council be more accountable locally? Would we still be sharing staff with Breckland? How will planning applications be dealt with? So many questions!

This is why we are making part of the AGM on 21 March an opportunity to discuss the question of a town council for Spalding. May I encourage you to come along, share your opinions, and help us form a concerted Civic Society view on the way forward? I hope we shall all be offered far more factual information about the choices than was presented – by both sides – before the EU Referendum. The information published for us may not be an exciting read, but I do hope we all take the time to engage with it.

David Jones

Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL



S O U T H
H O L L A N D
DISTRICT COUNCIL

SEE YOU IN COURT

IF YOU'D EVER WANTED to sit on the bench or stand in the bullet-proof dock of Spalding Magistrates Court, your chance came on the evening of 26 January, when Oliver Sneath and Dorota Szafalowicz welcomed about 20 members of the Society into their new home. It must be one of the most unusual homes in the country, complete with all mod. cons. – or rather 1843 cons. – such as a gothic-revival courtroom and basement police cells.

Amongst the government sell-off of local courts, Spalding's is one of the very few to have been offered for sale with its original fittings left virtually intact – the presiding magistrate's padded leather chair, enormous ceiling-high cupboards, marble fireplaces, a wrought-iron hat-stand, shelves of ancient legal tomes, portraits of past chairmen, and a large biscuit-tin full of keys all belonging to the building but mostly unlabelled! It is of course a listed building, and any internal alterations would need 'listed building consent' just as much as any external ones.

The new owners, however, after settling on some of the smaller rooms for their living quarters, are keen to preserve and indeed restore the rest as authentically as possible – not as a museum, but as a possible location for film or TV work. They are particularly anxious to discover a copy of the original plans.

Beginning to settle in has involved cleaning the green lichen from the front railings, learning how to wind up the eight-day public clock and establish a winding routine, beginning to sort out those keys, discovering an ingeniously folding fireplace, accidentally setting off the security alarms and floodlights

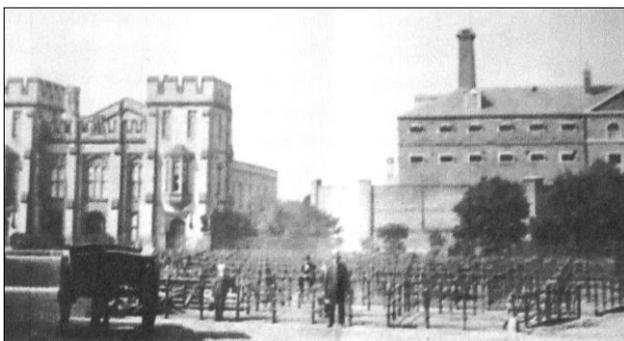


Many thanks therefore to Oliver and Dorota for allowing our most interesting visit and being our already very knowledgeable guides. One particularly poignant moment for one member of the Society was noticing the name "Mrs. Iris Woodward" amongst the lists of past magistrates. Iris Woodward was one of the prime movers to set up the Society in 1960 and was its first secretary for many years.

“WE ARE GUESTS”

“We are guests in the town and it's only right that we work with the local community”
Robert Hughes, *Managing Director of Hughes Electrical.*

THE HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS that have appeared in the previously blanked-out side window of Hughes Electrical are very much to the liking of the general public. “Although they have only been in place a few weeks we are delighted at the com-

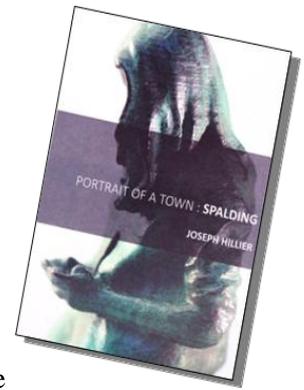


ments received from customers in the store, and those who take time to stop and view,” said Graham Boor, the store's manager.

This is the opening success in our Vinyl Blight campaign. The ideal solution would have been to use the window for the display of goods, but the internal layout of the shop precludes this at present, so the old photographs showing the previous uses of the site – as detailed in the last Newsletter – was the compromise worked out after Mr. Boor had approached the Society. Good publicity for the store, pleasure for people passing by, and a small improvement to the general attractiveness of the town centre. Co-operation and consideration. It's a win-win approach. Many thanks to Graham Boor, and we should be happy to discuss the issue with more businesses in the spirit of Mr. Hughes's remarks.

TARGET OVERTAKEN

Market Art Project



WE THOUGHT we would be able to raise £500. In the event, donations to the Market Art Project appeal have so far brought in double that, thanks to the generosity of Society members and well-wishers. Amongst them it has been gratifying to receive donations from quite a number of non-members, some of whom used to be Spalding residents but now live elsewhere and others who have just visited Spalding over the years. A very warm thank-you to everybody.

All fourteen of Joseph Hillier's small bronze figures are now finally in place, looking as if they have been part of the Spalding scene for years, each with a small descriptive plate:- "Steven with Onions" (Red Lion), "Fiona and Carol" (Prior's Oven), "Rex with *Soul of the Soil*" (Bookmark) There's also a larger plate at Ringrose Law's in the Sheepmarket, showing where they all are, and the leaflet for the whole sculpture trail (*above*) is now available at the tourist information desk in the South Holland Centre.

We could not have commissioned Joseph without the help of a very substantial grant from Arts Council England, secured through local arts organisation Transported. The Arts Council rightly requires

a contribution from the projects it supports, but fortunately not match-funding, which would have been impossible for us.

The Market Art Project is an ambitious one, envisaging five or six sculptures and mosaics in the town centre, where the livestock market was held until the 1930s. Further donations will now go towards funding the second commission, which is almost complete [*see across*].

Please note the appeal is still open.

There is a donation form below, and we hope members who may not yet have contributed will feel encouraged to do so to help bring the project towards full fruition. Letters to the local press from time to time lament what their writers feel is a shabbiness of the town centre outside Britain in Bloom time. The Market Art Project is one of the ways in which the Society hopes it can contribute to making the town centre an attractive place for all who live and work here and visit us. But it does need the help of all who would like to see the historic town centre making the best of its considerable potential.

Yes, I'd like to help the **Market Art Project** to enhance the centre of Spalding.

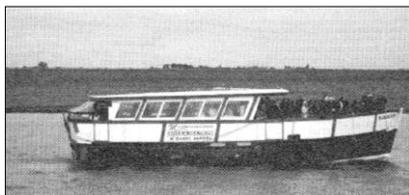
£5[] £10[] £25[] £50[] £100[] Your choice £ _____

Please make your cheque payable to **Spalding & District Civic Society**, and send to:
Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN.

Name.....

Address

Telephone Email



Summer outing aboard the

Boston Belle

from Sluice Bridge in Boston, down river to the mouth
of the River Witham and out into the Wash for a mile or so.

For the diary

Over 20 members have expressed an interest in such an excursion, and so a private outing is being arranged as above for **Thursday, 20 July**. We'll let you know the time, directions and other details by email and in the June Newsletter. Refreshments will be available on board.



THE HIRING

Market Art Project - the second commission

A FARMER and a shepherd shake hands. A shilling has been handed over. The young shepherd is hired. He will work for the farmer for a year, bed and board provided, and will be paid only when his twelve months are up.

In its hand-shake moment, Laury Dizengremel's sculpture will commemorate the annual Hiring Fair held each May in Hall Place, when farm-workers and domestics converged on Spalding to offer their skills to employers in search of a shepherd or ploughboy or

dairymaid.

With a full year's wages burning a hole in so many pockets and purses, the hiring fairs were also magnets for travelling showmen of all kinds, with their coconut-shies, freak shows and roundabouts, along with cheapjacks, card-sharps and pickpockets. There was music and dancing, drink and rowdy horseplay. And 19th century broadside ballads based on hiring fairs nearly always end with a warning to fair maids to beware of young men! Respectable townsfolk did not approve of the fairs.

Whilst Laury's farmer and farm-hand look back to 19th century agriculture, they also reach out to their 21st century counterparts in South Holland's food production, as depicted in many of Joseph Hillier's 14 small bronzes on buildings in the town centre.

The Making

BY HAPPY CHANCE Joseph's 21st century bronzes have in part been created using 21st century digital technology, whilst Laury's 19th century farmer and shepherd are bronze sculptures made in the traditional way. Apart from the initial photography, the same process can be traced back for several thousand years.

First, Laury took photographs of her nephew and his mate acting out the hand-shake between farmer and shepherd. With these as a guide, the actual process starts with the sculpture being created in clay. The sculpture is then encased in plaster to form a mould. From this mould a wax replica of the original sculpture is now created, exact in every detail except that it is hollow.

In its turn, the wax replica is encased in a thick ceramic shell. With the wax still inside, the shell is fired in a kiln, so that, when the wax melts and runs out through vents, it leaves behind a second perfect mould.

It is into this very strong ceramic mould that the molten bronze (at about 1150 °C) is poured. When cold, the mould is broken away and the third and final version of the sculpture emerges. Surprisingly, the bronze is pale grey.

The above is a condensed and much simplified account of a long and complicated process. For example, with all but the simplest shapes the original clay sculpture is cut up into more manageable sections – six altogether for our farmer and shepherd.

But it isn't the end of the story when the grey bronze pieces emerge from their smashed ceramic shells. The pieces have to be welded together, sand-blasted, blow-torched, washed with a chemical solution that darkens to brown as it dries (patination), doused with water, blow-torched again, painted with beeswax, and finally polished. In short, it involves a very close collaboration between artist and foundry over weeks of hands-on work.

It won't be too long, we hope, before bronze farmer and shepherd are shaking hands on a stone plinth in Hall Place.

John Charlesworth

□

Pictures from the top :- *Acting out the hiring* • *Laury creating the clay sculpture* • *Casting the bronze sections* • *The final sculpture before patination.*



CHIMES AND TRAILERS

THERE'S A SMALL GLASS PAGODA or kiosk beside the main lake now at Springfields. Inside, just before the hour, pale grey blades of grass or outstretched fingers emerge and start to grow upwards, followed by strange ghostly shapes with a painted faces. Come the hour, the grey hands strike out a tune from the small bells hanging above them. This is the **Springfields Chimes**, an art work originally commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council and artsNK and now Transported to Spalding.

The dozen faces have been chosen to reflect the achievements of Lincolnshire people. And there, amongst such national figures as John Wesley, Peter Scott and Matthew Flinders and locally significant ones like St. Guthlac and Maurice Johnson, is – to our surprise and delight – ‘our own’ **Hilary Healey**. Hilary was for many years an active member of the Society. The information board cites her as artist and archaeologist, authority on ancient pottery and expert on fenland dialect and place names.

More **Fenland Folk** are celebrated in another Transported project, this time in collaboration with local firm **FreshLinc**. The famous people here include Frank Pick (pioneering design administrator for the London Underground), Joseph Banks (botanist on Captain Cook's expeditions and director of Kew Gardens) and Sarah Swift (founder of the Royal College of Nursing).

If you find yourself stationary in an M25 tailback alongside a FreshLinc HGV or spot one at a German autobahn service station, you have the chance to see some marvellous artwork. Some of them are absolutely stunning: the surging stormy energy of the Pilgrim Fathers trailer or the vast stylised perspective of drainage wind-pumps (Vermuyden and the drainage engineers - *below*). The ten subjects were chosen by employees at FreshLinc and the artwork created by Neil Baker and Steven Hatton.



We appreciate there would be formidable logistical difficulties, but it would be marvellous, if a group of these huge mobile murals could be parked together centrally for a few hours (Victoria Street Carpark?), so we could all get a chance to enjoy them. Or even a parade through the town? Meanwhile, all praise to Transported and FreshLinc for an imaginative and inspiring undertaking.

MUCH APPRECIATED

Magistrates Court – it's nice to see the clock telling us the time again, the railings clean and a car in the forecourt. Signs of returning life!

- **New apartment block next to Holland House** - one of the most successful pastiche Georgian buildings in Spalding, a notoriously difficult style to bring off. Modifications to the original design suggested by the Society prevented it dominating the listed, genuinely Georgian Holland House next door.

- **Drainage Board Offices**, London Road – shabby tarmac of the forecourt replaced by much smarter block paving.

- **The Ivy Wall** – for showing how to maintain railing-mounted planters attractively through the winter months. (Contrast the embarrassing ones full of dead plants at the Swan Street crossing to Holland Market.)

- **Hill's Department Store's** inventive Christmas window dressing, this time with a TV programmes theme: *Top Gear*, *Gardener's World*, *Great British Bake-Off*, and so on.

- **Element 78**, Bridge Street – an elegant addition to the town centre's independent shops.



- **Springfields, FreshLinc and Transported** – for bringing public artworks to Spalding and spreading appreciation of the area abroad. (*See left.*)

- **Whichever public-spirited person** took the loppers to the overgrown ivy and privet at the old **Johnson Hospital** smothering two sections of footpath in Priory Road. (Unlikely to be the Gibraltar-based company who own and neglect the building.)

• Is it Angel's imagination or have more delightful little sculptures appeared on shop fronts in Spalding in recent weeks? And while we're establishing whether or not Angel walks around with her eyes shut, how long have those fabulous historic images of the town centre been on the side of Hughes electrical store?

SpaldingGuardian, 26 January 2017



The second in our series of some of the things that make Spalding a pleasant place to live and work in and to visit. Chosen this time by Secretary **Marion Brassington**.

SPALDING

A pedestrianised town centre – much more civilised than a car-filled high street.



We are fortunate to continue to be connected to the railway network. This was not the case in 1970, when a small group of Spalding residents, including my late husband and myself, went to the Houses of Parliament to deliver a petition to object to the proposed closure of the Peterborough-Lincoln line. We were ridiculed at the time, as it was the general opinion that the railways were finished and the future was in road transport. Fortunately, the line remained open and is now becoming busier, with more freight using it.



Another great asset. No longer can Spalding be called a cultural desert.

Some visitors I've met are fascinated by the ancient small alleyways of the town, such as the Hole in the Wall, Chapel Lane and Abbey Path. Other things I like about Spalding are the friendly independent shops, such as the baker's, greengrocer's, butcher's, a department store, and a book-shop, not to mention the variety of restaurants. Spalding has improved immensely over the past 50 years!

SOCIETY NOTES

2017 IS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY of the act of parliament that created “conservation areas”. Individual buildings of outstanding architectural or historical note were already protected, but the act recognised that some of the best-loved areas of our towns and villages, particularly the older parts that give them their individual character, have an architectural or historical value as a whole, although no individual building is outstanding, and needed protecting. The act came just in the nick of time. Whole central areas had been laid waste in the post-war rush to modernise, and the car was king. Vehicles must be kept moving at whatever cost and areas cleared to park them when they weren't. These were the days when a Spalding councillor could seriously propose covering over the river between Herring Lane and Holland Road to make a carpark, and County Highways planned to accommodate the ever-increasing A16 traffic by smashing a wide new road through the town centre. Conservation areas are indeed something to be grateful for, and civic societies up and down the country will be finding a variety of ways to mark their creation 50 years ago. At the moment your committee is exploring the possibility of a **joint project with Spalding Photographic Society** with a

view to an exhibition celebrating outstanding or intriguing features of the Spalding Conservation Area. [See p.8.]

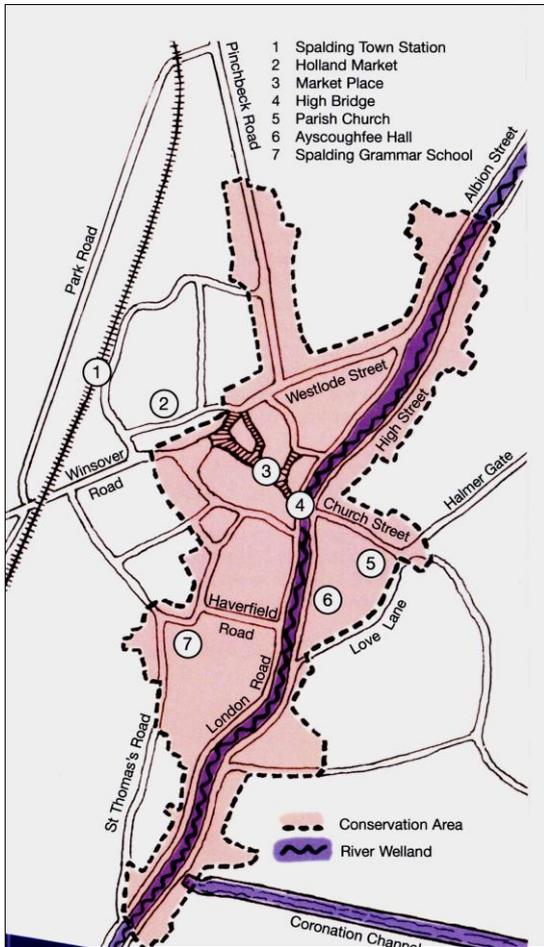
- We are pleased to welcome **new members** Neil and Jill Benson. But sorry to record the death of long-standing member **George Hastings**, who was Chairman of the Society in the middle of the long years when we were campaigning for a proper bypass for the A16 instead of that destructive “inner relief road” through the town centre.

- John Honnor continues to represent the Society on the Town Forum and, along with John Charlesworth, on the Riverside Improvement Forum. Annette Faulkner and the latter have just up-dated the riverside appraisal the Society made several years ago. Since the last Newsletter we have made useful contact with Tim Machin, Chairman of the Lincolnshire Branch of the CPRE, who writes a monthly column in the *Lincolnshire Free Press*. David Jones is our link of course with PEDALS, the Spalding Cycle Action Group. Please don't hesitate to contact any of them with matters of concern related to the above.

- The Treasurer would like to remind existing members that it is time to renew your **subscriptions** by filling in the form on p.8 or printing it out and sending it to him with your subscription. [Continued on next page.]

SPALDING CONSERVATION AREA

SPALDING'S CONSERVATION AREA was designated in 1970 and extended five years later. When it was



reviewed in 2007, the Society suggested four further extensions, three of which were adopted by the Council. The protections afforded by conservation area status are very clearly set out in the current *Local Plan* (Policy EN7) :-

Development, for example, must be sympathetic to the character of the area in its size, positioning, scale, materials and detailing. It must respect important views and closures, ancient street patterns and important spaces and preserve and protect existing trees and landscapes which contribute to the character of the conservation area. It should retain important architectural and historic features, street name plates and paving. And so on.

The much-delayed new *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan*, however, is a good deal more vague and generalised. How effective it will be remains to be seen. It will leave a good deal more room for argument.

◀ *Page 7*] • One of our members has drawn attention to the shrubs encroaching on the abstract sculpture on the river bank near High Bridge. We are investigating a possible solution.

• And we could do so much more with one or two members perhaps offering a little of their time, maybe helping with the rewarding blue plaques scheme or Market Art Project or the collaboration with the Photographic Society or as social secretary or press officer or managing our web-site. Why not consider it? You wouldn't be members if you didn't believe in the aim of helping to make the town as attractive as possible. There's no upper or lower age limit!

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.

Name.....

Address.....

Post Code..... Telephone..... E-mail.....

Please send to: Melvyn Price (Hon.Treasurer), 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN.

Gift Aid:- By signing the declaration below you will enable the Society to reclaim income tax on your subscription, so that it becomes worth almost a third more at no extra cost to yourself. I wish Spalding and District Civic Society to treat all my subscriptions since 6 April 2000 and all from the date below as Gift Aid.

Signature..... Print..... Date.....

Chairman: David Jones, 19 Ladywood Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2DA.
Secretary: Marion Brassington, 55 Pinchbeck Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QF.
Treasurer: Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN.
Newsletter: John Charlesworth, 37 Regent Street, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2YN.
Registered Charity Number 259956

01775 766145
 01775 767923
 01775 722908
 01775 768303

Website www.spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk



