

SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2018

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

YOUR CIVIC SOCIETY has several aims, as you know. The one that is occupying me at the moment is to do with making Spalding a more attractive place to live in and to visit. If Spalding is to prosper, people need to be visiting us, ideally from elsewhere, and spending their money here. One Saturday afternoon in Bridge Street I bumped into a couple of friends from the Peterborough area. I was surprised to see them, as normally lots of people tend to travel in the opposite direction to do their shopping, among crowds and at carbon-copy shops that you can find in any town of a certain size. My Peterborough friends, though, appreciate the more relaxed pace of Spalding's town centre and its more individual local shops and cafés.

The question is: Who is going out to Peterborough and the surrounding area and promoting Spalding town centre? Coachloads go to Springfields, and these shoppers would probably enjoy a sortie into the town centre, if for example there was a shuttle bus service. True, Broadgate Builders support the Water Taxi, which is great – unless you want to use it in the winter. PEDALS has had the cycle route from Springfields into the town centre properly signposted. And the Civic Society is building up a trail of art works to remind us of the area's farming heritage; we already have the Joseph Hillier figures, and shortly we hope to have a bronze sculpture in Hall Place, to be followed in due course by others of sheep in the Sheep Market and cattle in New Road and so on. It's an ambitious project, but Boston has found that it can attract further substantial funding by installing public art.

What are Spalding's councillors doing to support these positive moves? We have had some donations from individual budgets, but what is the SHDC tourism policy for Spalding? Is there a tourism

policy? If not, why not? Does the Council see that it could be taking the lead in promoting our town? We believe that there is some s106 money lying around which could be invested in our town, but it is difficult to discover any details. Meanwhile, litter is building up, street furniture is at last being repaired, but with poor quality workmanship - is our local workforce really incapable of doing a decent job? I suspect part of the problem is some managers and councillors less committed than one would hope. Communication seems to be poor between the County and District Councils. Stallholders invade cycle racks and seating in Hall Place with impunity. Does anyone care? What do visitors to the town think when they come across the kind of thing pictured on Page 7? And are they likely to return?

That's not to say that there aren't things we *can* be proud of. The South Holland Centre's varied and exciting programme, Ayscoughfee Museum and Gardens, the improving Pumpkin Parade and popular '40s Weekend, the Open Arts Exhibition's platform for local artists, the successful Midlands in Bloom team. There's no lack of commitment from the responsible council members and officers here.

No, it is the dispiriting overall shabbiness of the town centre that is the problem – partly the result of divided responsibilities. Yes, of course, some local shopkeepers are trying their best - please support them! And we in the Civic Society are making our contribution. We ask you, the members, to back our campaigns, by lobbying, persuading both friends and people in authority, talking the town centre up, and why not come on the Committee and join in more actively there - the AGM will be upon us soon, an opportunity to serve, to make a difference, and you will receive a warm welcome!

David Jones



Street clutter. There *must* be a better way.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES SECURED

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan

ONE of the more controversial proposals in the draft plan has proved to be the provision of new shops. In the first half of the plan period all these are to go to Springfields, with Spalding only getting a look-in in the second half. This puts the cart right before the horse. With its 2.4m visitors a year, Springfields needs no boost; whereas Spalding, with its loss of town-centre shops to employment agencies and beauty parlours, does.

In December, the Society, Spalding Town Retailers Association and Schroeder's (the owners of Holland Market) argued strongly before the government inspector to put the town centre first. In vain. (Schroeder's of course has its own agenda, as it still wants to build stores on the Halley Stewart Field.)

The Inspector, however, was sufficiently concerned about the retail and social vitality of the town centre to demand an extra policy be included (No.22). Here is the *Plan* team's draft.

Boston and Spalding town centres will continue to be the primary destinations for retail, entertainment, markets and events and where rich environmental qualities can be promoted, enhanced and appreciated.

The Councils will consider opportunities to support and extend the offer of the town centres as destinations through the following:

1. Supporting the redevelopment of land within the town centre boundary that can provide for retail and other town centre uses;

2. Enhancing sites and ensuring changes to premises have regard to the significance of heritage assets and the special interests of the Conservation Areas and their settings;

3. Enhancing the public realm through improvements to accessibility and signage;

4. Promoting town centre events;

5. Providing interpretation and promotional information;

6. Supporting proposals that seek to maintain the viability and attractiveness of the weekly markets;

7. Considering opportunities to support temporary uses in vacant premises in the primary shopping areas.

All of which is admirable, except First, §3 seemed oddly and unacceptably limited, and we were able to get it redrafted to include public spaces as well as accessibility and signage.

Second, the use of "consider" (twice) could well come in practice to mean mere discussion and little action. So we were able to get the wording strengthened to: **The Councils will promote appropriate opportunities to support** (Para.2); and **Encouraging opportunities to support** (§7). In short, Policy 22 now requires the two local councils to be pro-active with regard to their town centres.

Meanwhile, following what now seems to have become a pattern, the next sessions before the Inspector have been postponed from February to April. Slowly – very slowly – does it.

PLANNING MATTERS

AMONG the usual applications to build house extensions and do tree work, a variety of issues have emerged. We have supported the replacement windows on Aycoughfee School's classroom block, as they will now match those on the assembly hall. The owners of the Sessions House wish to remove the historic dock, which obstructs their main living space. We have expressed the hope that the dock be fully photographed and documented. We have opposed the request for vehicular access at 84 London Road – enough front gardens have been ruined by provision for parked cars and the property appears to have car access from St.Thomas's Road at the rear. When we found that a proposed garage with upstairs flat in Bowditch Road was really four garages, we chose to oppose the application.

Our main interest has been with the proposed development of Lock's Mill Farm (Stables Motel); the plans are for decent housing with gardens larger than

current practice and provision to prevent parked cars dominating the streetscape; but we said we should wish the historic farm buildings to be retained and adapted as part of the estate.

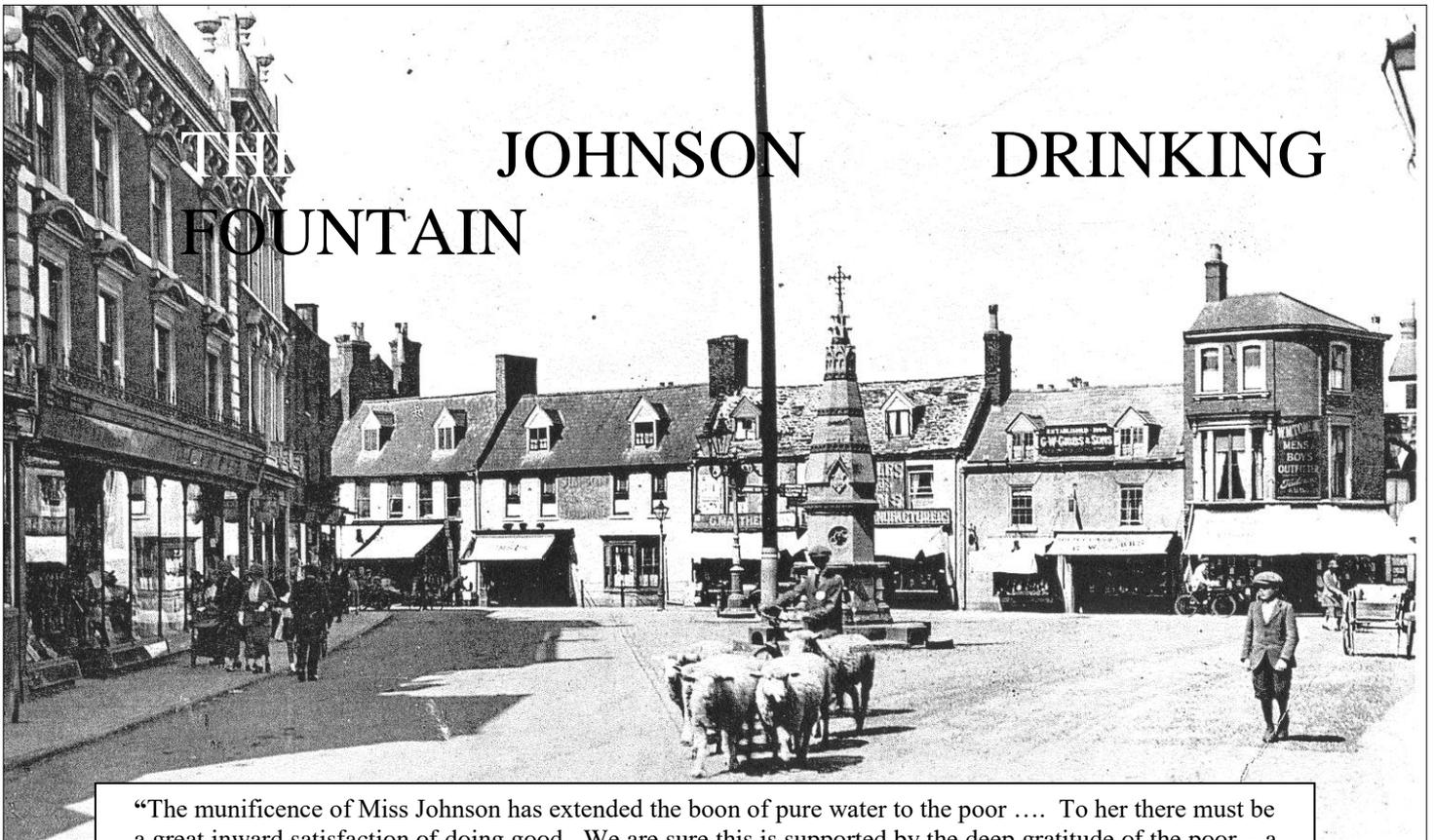
The proposal to replace the Broad Street Business Centre by a mews-style group of flats and maisonettes was refused, despite its generally sympathetic and imaginative understanding of its site. The reason is that it was not considered to be in keeping with the surrounding buildings. Which sounds like a preference for pastiche. That would be really depressing. After all, on that principle, our cherished Georgian buildings would never have been built, as not being 'in keeping' with the existing half-timbered houses at that date. And one of the charms of so many of our market town is surely the mixture of buildings of different dates side-by-side in all their various architectural styles. Think Stamford.

Planning Committee

THE FOUNTAIN

JOHNSON

DRINKING



“The munificence of Miss Johnson has extended the boon of pure water to the poor To her there must be a great inward satisfaction of doing good. We are sure this is supported by the deep gratitude of the poor – a gratitude that will grow and expand as the years fly past. In our minds it but crowns the edifice of a long list of noble gifts and deeds that will not soon be forgotten ...” *Lincolnshire Free Press*, 30 December 1873.

THE PAST

Squalor and Misery

THE AVERAGE LIFE-EXPECTANCY in Spalding in 1850 was 23 years and 9 months. Roughly a third of children died before reaching 5 years old. This is not perhaps surprising, as most people were dependent on well-water, which was more or less contaminated as there was no sewerage system. (The well-to-do could buy spring water by the pail brought in from Bourne in water-carts.) There were six slaughter-houses near the town centre, none of which had proper drainage, with the waste thrown into cess pools or boiled for pig-food. Cess-pits were often no more than open ditches and in the worst quarters of the town human excrement was piled up in the centre of the cramped courtyards. A government health inspector reported seeing “more squalor and misery [than] could scarcely be surpassed in the crowded lanes and allies [*sic*] of the Metropolis itself”.

The local authority showed no concern to improve either water supply or sewage disposal, preferring to use the improvement rate to put gaslights in the streets, build a corn exchange and buy land for a cemetery, and it was left to the newly-formed Spalding Water Works Company (1860) to set up a private water works, with filtering beds and a brick

water tower. This was in Pinchbeck Road (where the open-air swimming pool was later built), with the water piped along Pinchbeck Road to a limited area of the town centre. At first water was drawn from the Blue Gowt Drain, but this proved unreliable in times of drought, so in 1870 an Act of Parliament was obtained and capital raised to pipe spring water from Bourne to the Spalding Water Works.

Miss Mary Ann Johnson

It was, however, solely due to an act of personal generosity that this supply of good-quality water was extended to the poorer parts of the town. In 1873 Miss Mary Ann Johnson gave the Spalding Water Works Company £1,500 – that is, £150,000 in today’s money – to lay water mains along Winsover Road as far as the ‘Robin Hood’ and then up Hawthorn Bank; along Holbeach Road to the ‘Pigeon Inn’; and along London Road to Little London. To mark their gratitude to Miss Johnson the Company decided to erect a commemorative public drinking fountain in the town centre.

The Fountain

The fountain was designed to go “in the Market Place”. Hence its impressive size. Work had begun on the mains in November 1873, and by

July construction of the fountain was under way – now in Hall Place – on the site of an old pump. By the beginning of August it was complete.

I have so far been unable to trace any account of its unveiling in August or September of 1874, as the 1874 numbers of the local press are missing from both the micro-reels in the Library and the bound copies in the Free Press office.

Removal from Hall Place

The dismantling in 1954 was controversial. “One of the biggest crimes that has happened in Spalding,” said one councillor. Basically a group of councillors wanted the fountain out of the way because it was interfering with the County Surveyor’s experimental traffic measures in Hall Place. None of them had given any thought to its re-siting – or indeed whether to re-erect it at all. The Council approved the dismantling by the narrow margin of 7-5 on the Wednesday evening, and by teatime the following day it was gone. “If other things were done as quickly it would be nice,” commented one member of the public. There was no coherent overall plan. It was not until two years later that it was decided to put the fountain together again, in Ayscoughfee Gardens.

THE PRESENT

Once again the fountain has been dismantled, this time to make way for the proposed WW2 War Memorial. Its pieces are temporarily in storage at the Council’s works depot; but SHDC Chairman, Councillor Rodney Grocock, has pledged that the fountain will eventually be re-erected in the town.

THE FUTURE ?

Where? The Society has long wanted to see the fountain brought back into the town centre. There are many reasons.

●1● The fountain was always intended for the centre. “In the Market Place”, say the minutes. Hence the gothic grandeur of its design.

●2● It needs a busy place. As a memorial, the more people that see it the better it does its job – commemorating Miss Johnson’s generous gift of clean water for “the labouring classes”, “the poor”. Ordinary people. To seclude the fountain again in Ayscoughfee Gardens would stymie that memorial purpose, as relatively few people visit the

gardens compared with the many in the town centre each day. It would be a true act of remembrance, therefore, to re-erect the fountain amidst ordinary people going about their ordinary lives, rather than in a former pleasure ground of the gentry.

●3● Put in the Market Place, it would reconnect us to our history by restoring a focal point. Older OS maps note the site of a former market cross there, and the Hilkie Burgess engraving (1822) shows a quite impressive public water pump. (Was the spire-like pump the inspiration for the fountain’s shape?)



●4● It would strengthen Spalding’s identity. An important part of that identity was lost when the fountain was replaced by the stock paraphernalia of a traffic roundabout. Restored to the centre, it would make the centre something special again, clearly distinct from Bourne or Boston, Sleaford or Stamford. Far from being just another ornamental object in a park, if it was re-erected in the Sheepmarket or Hall Place or the Market Place its striking prominence would transform the public space around it. (See title photograph.)

●5● A bold step like this would be proof that there really was a will to make a difference – as part of a long-needed regeneration of the centre, reviving its vitality and viability. Tourists will visit historic towns that are different, delightful, interesting, with a strong visual character of their own. And if the centre is to tap into Springfields’ 2.4m annual visitors, one

key way is to enhance the centre, to make it as attractive as possible to live and work in and to visit. Not to mention retaining resident shoppers. Increased attractiveness means increased footfall. These are the underlying aims of the Society’s Market Art project, too.

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1. Always meant for town centre.
2. Memorial needs a busy place.
3. Restore historic focal point.
4. Strengthen distinct identity.
5. Enhance attractiveness and therefore footfall.
6. Publicity. The past helping to combat plastic bottle scourge of the present.



NEXT BLUE PLAQUE



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 man-

anager 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 vital 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.

[Thanks to Colin Baslington for extra information.]

THE HIRING

IN DECEMBER the farmer and the shepherd shook hands in the Red Lion Quarter (*right*). In January the planning application was submitted for Laury Dizengremel's sculpture, commemorating the May Hiring Fair that used to take place in Hall Place each year. The bronze has been completed for some time now and has been on show since before Christmas in the South Holland Centre, Hill's Department Store, the Red Lion Quarter and, at the time of writing, Ayscoughfee Hall Museum, to all of whom we are most grateful for their willing help. The process of seeking the support in principle of the relevant Council members and officers and the preparation of the application itself has all taken rather more time than we had anticipated. If all now goes smoothly, we are cautiously hoping *The Hiring* may be in position – appropriately – in May, or at any rate by midsummer. We will let you know the official unveiling date, as soon as it can be fixed.

The sculpture is the second commission in the Society's ambitious Market Art Project, which aims to celebrate Spalding's market heritage with a group of public arts works to enhance the whole experience of the town centre and, we hope, prove a tourist attraction, so strengthening its vitality and retail viability. Our appeal has so far raised well over £1000 from members and well-

wishers to add to the generous grants that have come from the Arts Council via Transported. To all our sincere thanks.

Do let your friends and family know, not forgetting those who have perhaps moved away from the town and might like to make a donation for old time's sake – **for the appeal is still very much open**. Because next it will be the animals' turn – sheep for the Sheepmarket perhaps or cattle for New Road – in sculpture or mosaic. Animals often seem to bring out some of the more lively and exciting work in artists.



(Footnote: Laury has recently been commissioned by Richmond-on-Thames Civic Society to produce a life-size bronze of Virginia Woolf, one of Richmond's most famous former residents. The design shows her sitting on a park seat, and no doubt there will eventually be plenty of visitors ready to be photographed or selfied beside her.)

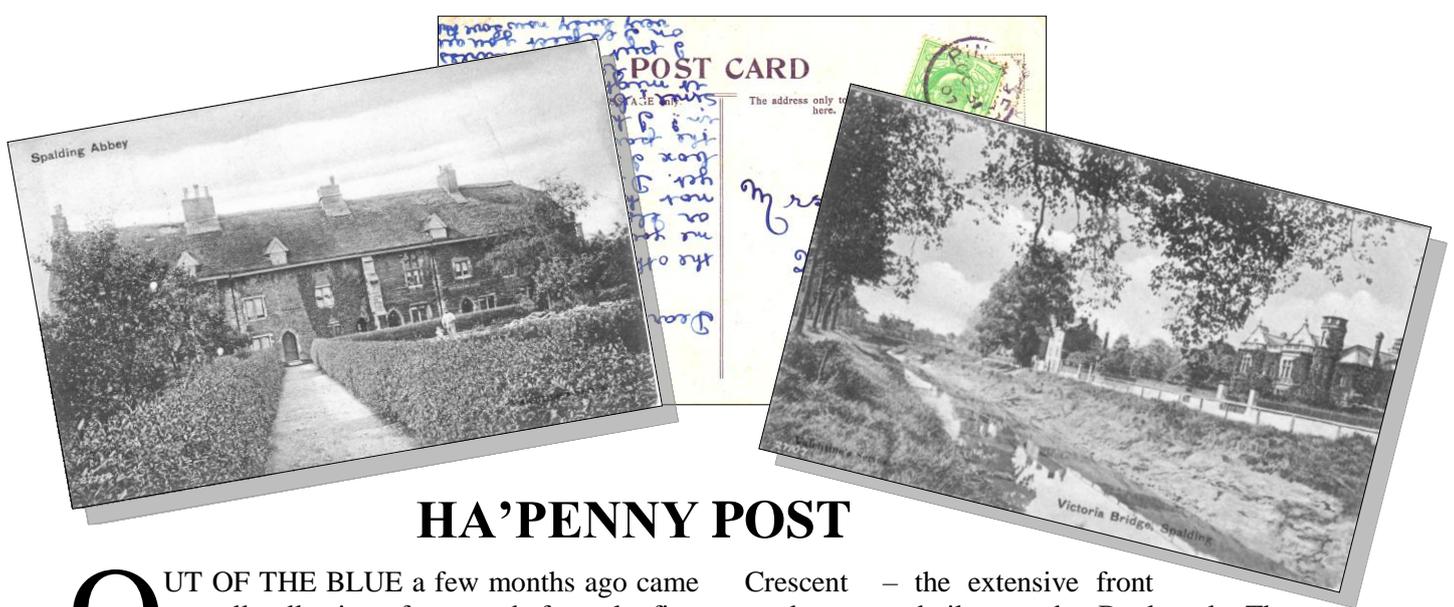


Yes, I'd like to help the **Market Art Project** to enhance the centre of Spalding.

£5[] **£10**[] **£25**[] **£50**[] **£100**[] **Other £** _____

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.....



HA'PENNY POST

OUT OF THE BLUE a few months ago came a small collection of postcards from the first years of the last century. They have been kindly donated to the Society by Mr. Norman Clarke, now living in Fife, who was born in Spalding in the 1920s and whose grandparents farmed at Cowbit. The left photograph shows what we now know as Abbey Buildings in Priory Road and would have been taken from where Francis Street joins the

Crescent – the extensive front gardens now built over by Bookmark. The right card shows a view across the (tidal) river from Churchgate towards what is now Georgian Court. The palatial be-creepered villa on the right is Haverfield House – built 1870s, demolished 1936.

We are most grateful to Mr. Clarke for his gift, which will add valuably to the Society's growing collection of old postcards and photographs.

5 NOVEMBER 2017

RETURNING to London from Leeds, Alan Bennett found his Virgin Trains journey disrupted on account of line repairs. The replacement bus promised from Newark to Peterborough, as he later wrote in his diary, never turned up, and an onward train arrived “impossibly full with people standing all the way down the aisles”. As it was dark by now, there was “no indication which way the train is going until out of the gloom there's an almost celestial vision of the floodlit Lincoln Cathedral”.

Later, a stone is thrown at the train, which loosens people's tongues. “It's like one of those 1940s films” in which a group of people are marooned in a storm and gradually reveal themselves to one another.

er. “[We're] a disparate group” – the young man who gave up his seat to me, two jolly women sitting on the floor, a man sitting in utter silence who is later recognised as a Tory MP, a woman with a three-months-old baby, and two unsmiling teenagers who scarcely raise their eyes from their screens throughout.

The journey should have taken two hours. “We roll into King's Cross at twenty past ten, five and a half hours after leaving Leeds, but still feeling it's a deliverance that we were not stuck outside Spalding.” (From *The London Review of Books*, December 2017.)

[I wonder what he's got against Spalding? Editor.]

◀ Page 4] ●6● And such a return could even make national news – if it ran water again. In a letter to the *Free Press* last month Mark Loosemoore wrote: “Given the current concern over plastic pollution caused in no small extent by single use drinking bottles surely this is the ideal opportunity to be proactive”, even to “get ahead of the game”, by providing “a constant supply of free drinking water available to all in the centre of town” (30 January). The Mayor of London is planning to install drinking fountains across central London. Glastonbury is banning plastic bottles from 2019. Anti-plastic action is



trending. The cost of making the Johnson Fountain functional again? Isn't there a striking prestige PR project here waiting for someone to take up? (Anglian Water? Local pump business?) The headlines would be pretty well guaranteed. The past stepping in to rescue the present. **John Charlesworth**

[Sources: Norman Leveritt and Michael Elsdon: *Aspects of Spalding, 1790-1930*; Neil Wright: *Spalding, An Industrial History*; Bernard Clark: *Mid-Nineteenth Century Spalding*; *The Lincolnshire Free Press*; and a particular thank-you to **Richard Howell** for the title photograph from an early 1900s postcard in his collection.]

NOT APPRECIATED



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

1 & 2: LCC repairs to Market Place seating – raw, splintered ends ready to snag clothing and harm toddlers' exploring fingers. 3: LCC recent replacement of missing Hall Place slats, first reported to them in vain over two years ago – same shoddy workmanship. 4: Public seating in Hall Place commandeered for traders' private convenience. 5: Abbey Walk – rubbish still there (plus a mattress) after a week. 6: Priory Road - storm damage unrepaired after 9 months. 7: But encouraging to find two LCC Highways sections now talking to each other to share a single pole, instead of perpetuating the clutter of two poles a mere 30cm apart. It needed the Society's intervention to get 1 & 2 smoothed down a bit and 6 attended to. The photos were all taken in the Conservation Area, a sad underside to the lovely town shown in the Photographic Society's pictures in our *Heart of a Town* summer exhibition.

For the diary



EXPLORING THE STUMP

illustrated talk
by

ERNIE NAPIER

(Chairman of East Midlands Association of Civic Societies)

who knows the building inside out
as mentor of the church's guides



Tuesday, 20 March, 7.30
Business Studies Centre, Spalding G.S.

SOCIETY NOTES

WE ARE PLEASED to report a most generous donation to the Society's funds from the 3rd Baron Shepherd of Spalding, who has been in contact with us over our next blue plaque – see Page 5.

After the gift of old postcards to the Society from Mr. Norman Clarke, discovered whilst doing some clearing out, we wonder if members have any old postcards of Spalding gathering dust somewhere that they don't really want to throw out but don't quite know what to do with. We should be very pleased to find them a home in our archive collection. Or we could make photocopies and return them. Please contact Marion Brassington – details below.

If anyone has memories of the Johnson Drinking Fountain when it was in Hall Place, particularly if they remember drinking from it or seeing others drinking, John Charlesworth would be very pleased to hear from you – contact details below.

Members who would like to join the committee or be nominated as an officer please contact the Secretary or the Chairman – contact details below.

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 below or printing it out and sending it to him with your subscription – address below.

MUCH APPRECIATED

• **White Hart, St. Barnabas Trust** – it's good to see the long-empty side back in use again (though disappointing so little use is being made of the window display possibilities, unlike the Sue Ryder shops, for example).

• **Element 78** – for its consistently elegant and sophisticated window displays.

• **LCC Highways** – for using a single pole for more than one sign (picture P.7), instead of their usual multi-pole practice. More of this new common-sense, please.

• **SHDC** – for keeping on top of occasionally reappearing graffiti along the Riverside Walk, after the major clean-off by the Riverside Improvement Forum last year.

• **Riverside Improvement Forum** – for a major litter assault, shrub trimming and perennial planting on part of the Riverside Walk.

• **Councillors Liz Sneath, Gary Taylor and Place Manager Paul Jackson** for taking up the shoddy workmanship issue (P.7) after we'd drawn it to their attention.

• **Hole-in-the-Wall** – for the ray of daffodil sunshine round the open-air area at the rear, though the work on converting the pub to a restaurant with flats above is depressingly slow.

Correction – Tuby's Funfair always removed their fly-posting after their visits, we said last time, unlike the two circuses. Sad to say – perhaps noting what the circuses get away with – the Funfair followed their bad example last October.

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.

Secretary: Marion Brassington, 55 Pinchbeck Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QF. 01775 767923

Treasurer: Melvyn Price, 34 Avebury Gardens, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2EN. 01775 722908

Newsletter: John Charlesworth, 37 Regent Street, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2YN. 01775 768303

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