

SPALDING & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2026



Monument to 'The Missing of the Somme' at Thiepval, France. Its size may be gauged by the seven white dots to the right of the monument. These are the headstones of graves.

‘THERE MUST BE NO CROSSES’

TYRINGHAM in Buckinghamshire is barely a hamlet. Its church has a marble tablet to the local men killed in the Great War. There are three names. Thiepval, a French village obliterated by the war, is the site now of a huge memorial arch to ‘The Missing of the Somme’, those for whom there is no known burial place. It has 73,000 names.

Both memorials were designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, as was the Cenotaph in Whitehall – and over 60 other memorials.

“There must be no religious signs or symbols” – Lutyens was adamant. It was not only Christians who gave their lives, he said, but also those of other faiths, or none. He had a hard struggle to get his view accepted.

It was details like this, in the well-attended talk that Tim Skelton of the Lutyens Society gave us on Tuesday 4 November, that have enabled us to see with more understanding eyes our own Lutyens war memorial in Ayscoughfee Gardens. [Page 3

[Chairman p.2](#)

[AGM p.4](#)

[Georgians p.5](#)

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

THE project proposals that we put to the Town Board include completing the MARK-IT Trail, landscaping round the Cattle statues and restoring the White Hart's name to its frontage. If our applications are successful, we will make an announcement in due course.

We already know we have secured support for installing The Bakers statue, as it is mentioned in the [Spalding Heritage Strategy](#). This can be found along with the [Spalding Conservation Area Appraisal](#) document and proposed [South & East Lincolnshire Traditional Building Design Guide](#) and the associated [Spalding Shop Front Guide](#), which have all been out for consultation*.

We have responded to the consultation, and some of us have also had the opportunity to meet the Heritage Manager for the South & East Lincolnshire Partnership, Emilie Wales, and I am pleased to report that some of our proposed amendments to the *Conservation Area Appraisal* have been taken on board, and there is a good chance that part of King's Road, including Station House, may be added to the Conservation Area. If successful, this could open the door to potential funding to bring the building back into use. Maybe it's time to start a conversation on what that use might be. Originally the station-master's house, could it become a community asset telling the story of the important role the railway had in the development of Spalding? I would welcome any thoughts on its use, as I am sure we may be asked at some point.

If the Council approves the *Spalding Shop Front Design Guide*, it will be the culmination of ten year's effort by the Society. Thank you to all who've supported our campaign. The *Design Guide*, together with the excellent *South and East Lincolnshire Traditional Building Design Guide*, should gradually begin to have effect. Not instant, but at least now owners of business premises will have some guidance to follow, which should speed up decision-making on new frontages, as, if the guidance is followed, a planning application should not need to go before the planning committee.

There have also been two highly significant national consultations on planning reform. (Page 6)

Before our next Newsletter we will be holding our AGM. This will be an important one. Over the last few months we have been reviewing some of our processes and policies. We have updated our membership form and privacy policy, and will present an updated constitution for members' consideration. The review has also concluded that the current subscription is no longer sustainable and therefore we shall be proposing a small increase. We are also considering a new membership category for businesses and organisations. Would there be interest if we were to do so? The Society originally offered this category (for one guinea a year!) and other societies offer this category.

Another change under way is the building of a new website. It's unlikely to be ready for the time you read this, but it won't be far off. The current website is limited in its functions. The new site will include updated articles and information about our work, together with a blog section that will enable us to provide short snippets of news about our work or other happenings in the town. Most importantly it will improve viewing on a tablet or a mobile device. This does mean that some of our web-pages will change. If you've saved any bookmarks to our existing website, please do update them.

There are some other interesting developments in the town of note. Spalding BID has launched a new website and a mobile app. The app can be found on Apple and Google Play under "Hello Spalding" – website:- <https://spaldingbid.co.uk/>. A key feature is its events listing. Any event in the Spalding BID area can be listed, so if you belong to any other organisations in the town that holds public events, do contact Spalding BID and let them know.

Another big recent announcement is that a new organisation – Past Present Possible – a recently formed cultural collective for the arts, heritage and community sectors, has successfully passed the first stage of a six-figure funding bid to celebrate the legacy of BBQ 67. More details on page 8.

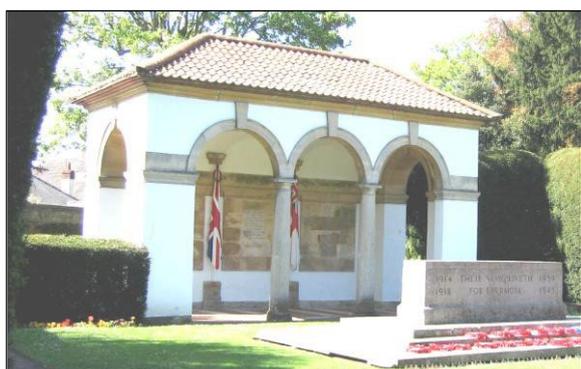
Other things in the pipeline are not quite ready to be announced publicly, so do keep an eye out on our Social Media Channels (Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn) and the press. We will also be sharing them on our new website when it is launched.

John Bland

* <https://www.sholland.gov.uk/article/29251/Heritage-Consultation-Documents>

Page1] Sir Edwin Lutyens was the foremost British architect of his time. Designer of the eye-catching turreted Castle Drogo in Devon, he was much in demand for mansions during the Edwardian country-house boom, and the town-planner and architect-in-chief for the enormous New Delhi project in India. So it was not surprising, said Tim, that the War Office arranged for him to visit the Western Front in 1917 to suggest how the war dead might most fittingly be buried and commemorated. Hence the simple unified overall design for the war cemeteries built across the battle-fields of the Western Front after the war, all with the distinctive ‘War Stone’, the altar-like stone below.

“The way this renowned architect came to be designing Spalding’s war memorial, however, is not as one might have expected.” The town’s young MP, Francis McLaren, had volunteered and been wounded at Gallipoli in 1915 and, having transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, was killed in an air crash in 1917. His widow was keen that he should be commemorated in the town along with all others from Spalding who had died in the war. She contacted her



aunt, Gertrude Jekyll, the famous plants-woman and garden designer and collaborator with Edwin Lutyens. Barbara McLaren chose a spot in Ayscoughfee Gardens and commissioned Lutyens, with Council support (as the McLarens would be contributing a substantial sum themselves, with more to be raised by public subscription).

The designs were controversial from the start. Some wanted something more practical than a monu-

ment anyway, such as a town-centre clock or extension to the hospital; others wanted an obelisk or cenotaph in the Market Place; and why were there to be no crosses?

A public meeting was called, and a packed Corn Exchange invited to choose between the Lutyens memorial, a chiming clock for the Corn Exchange and converting Ayscoughfee Hall into a branch of the YMCA. Debate was stormy, the chairman was forced to resign for being biased, then later voted back in again, his wife fainted. There was even fierce argument as to who should vote: whether all adult residents or only those eligible to vote in parliamentary elections (which would have excluded a large number of women at this time).

Parliamentary electors it was, and they selected the design we see today, scaled-down from the original more imposing drawings. These had featured grand colonnades either side of a central pavilion. Oddly, it was originally to have been sited on the long (west) side of the lake, turning its back on the lake, rather than at its head as now. It was completed and unveiled in 1922. Lutyens came to



Honourable Artillery Company Cemetery, Ecoust-St.-Mein

regard it as a sort of template, and various versions of the pavilion (*above*) can be found in many of the war grave cemeteries he designed for the Flanders battlefields. Its national importance was recognised in 2015, when it was listed a Grade I monument. In short, the memorial is rather special, and it was good to see the detailed, loving, restoration it was given last year. It has 275 names.

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



AGM



Reports
on the past year's
activities.

Future
plans and projects.

Changes
proposed
to the constitution
and
to the subscription
rates.

What
would you like
the Society
to be doing?

*

Have your say.
Join the Committee
and help to
shape Spalding?

What have the Georgians Done for Us ?

illustrated talk by guest speaker

James Darwin

of The Georgian Group

When designing a 'heritage' building to 'fit in' with a Conservation Area, why do architects so often come up with something 'Georgian'? And so often get it wrong? As with the huge care-home approved last year for the Bull and Monkie site.

This is one of the topics we hope James Darwin will be able to throw some light on.

The Georgian Group was founded in 1937, mainly with the aim of stopping the destruction of Georgian London to make way for modern developments. Today it fields 6000 notifications a year from planning authorities seeking its expert advice when faced with planning applications proposing the demolition or alteration to Georgian or early 19th century buildings.

How do they cope? And why does it matter?

James Darwin is Head of Casework at the Georgian Group. He was formerly an Inspector in the Midlands Team at Historic England and a Caseworker for the Victorian Society

Tuesday 7 April, 7.30pm

Spalding Baptist Church, Swan St., Spalding, PE11 1BT



THE GEORGIAN GROUP

THE GEORGIAN GROUP'S beginning in 1937 sounds to have had an almost cliquy, niche sort of feel to it, with founders described as "aristocratic and often eccentric". Their urgent aim – then and still – was "to campaign for the preservation of eighteenth and early nineteenth century buildings and their settings". Today, their expertise and experience are recognised officially. As "statutory consultees" they receive on average 6,000 notifications a year from local authorities' planning departments concerned



Hengrave, Suffolk Worth saving?

about developers' applications to demolish or make inappropriate alterations to Georgian buildings. They also get "hundreds of requests for advice from the general public and local civic societies".

A wide variety of cases come their way, so that from day to day they may find themselves advising on "the conversion of houses in Lincolnshire market towns into houses of multiple occupation, on church reordering schemes, major works to country houses, and largescale city centre redevelopment projects."



Lowther Castle, Cumbria Where would you start?

"Georgian – relating to British architecture of the reigns of Kings I-IV (1714-1830), characterised by restrained elegance and the use of neoclassical styles." *Concise Oxford Dictionary*

PLANNING MATTERS

IT HAS BEEN A QUIET PERIOD for planning and listed building applications. The most controversial application was from BT to erect a street hub (electronic advertising board) outside Boot's in the pedestrianised shopping area. It was refused by SHDC, but an appeal is ongoing.

We objected to works at 2 and 2A in the Sheepmarket, where replacement UPVC windows were proposed. This was also refused by SHDC. An appeal is ongoing here, too.

We also objected to the illuminated signs and barber's pole at 50 Westlode Street, and this application was also refused by SHDC.

Issues have also been raised with the Enforcement and Conservation Officers about the illuminated signs at the

Sessions House and the inappropriate paving and fencing at the former Geest Social Club in Spring Gardens. Both are listed buildings. We are awaiting feedback on all of these matters.

The Sessions House has also erected a café-type vending unit on the left-hand side of the main building, and a retrospective application is being considered. We have commented that not nearly enough information has been supplied for the application to be properly considered, and the matter remains ongoing.

More generally, we are disappointed that SHDC seem to be accepting planning applications that are in an unacceptable form, with little or no detail to consider, and we intend to take this up with them. **Howard Baxter**

DISTURBING NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS

SPORT ENGLAND, the Victorian Society, the Gardens Trust – planning authorities are required by law to notify them and other similar bodies (‘statutory consultees’) about relevant planning applications. The Government wants to alter this. Hence proposals now issued for consultation.

Ministers seem to have a noisy and ill-informed bee in their bonnet here. Of course there aren’t enough houses being built. It’s all the fault, they say, of blockages in the planning system. And they point their finger at the statutory consultees, who intervene when ill-thought-out planning proposals are submitted. Instead of supporting such guardians of good development, the Government is now proposing to stop automatically notifying them of planning applications, so making it harder for them to be aware of poor proposals that would benefit from their expert inspection. Their expertise enables them to comment in far more detail than we could expect to do. Such bodies have a good record of commenting locally, with Sport England, for instance, instrumental in saving two Spalding playing fields from partial development. We have, therefore, strongly opposed this Government attempt to stifle informed inspection of development proposals.

The second Government consultation is even more worrying. It involves no less than a complete rewrite of the *National Planning Policy Framework*. Consultation closes on 10 March. To date, we have provided feedback to Civic Voice, who are preparing a response, and we will be responding on particularly pertinent issues directly ourselves.

Even to respond presents a challenge, however.

1) By amalgamating various policies, the Government have made it very difficult to identify the areas where policies are being weakened. But weakened they are. 2) The consultation document consists of 225 questions, in answer to every one of which the text of the revised *National Planning Policy Framework* must be referred to. Far better, surely, to allow direct comments on the proposed text, so that flawed proposals can be readily identified. It must be one of the worst designed consultations possible. More like an exercise in smoke and mirrors than a consultation.

The actual proposals are equally disturbing. First, the Government are proposing more frequent reviews for *local* plans, with far greater detail. Such reviews to take no longer than 30 months. Given that it took seven years to complete the current *Southand East Lincolnshire Local Plan*, it will be interesting to see how the Government expects it to

be done without extra funding for Local Planning Authorities to do it.

Yes, the public will be able to have their say on their Local Plan, but **this seems to be the only area where there will be any public participation in the planning system.** It ignores the fact that the public rarely get involved in their Local Plans, but do sometimes engage very strongly with individual planning applications, especially if controversial,

It seems that the Government is intent on depriving individuals and even elected councillors of a say on individual planning applications and putting far more decisions into the delegated hands of individual planning officers. With the greatest respect to planning officers, this policy poses a great risk that poorly designed developments will be approved. All the more so with the coming Local Government Reforms, when there’s a greater likelihood that decisions will be made by officers from a desk miles away without the important local knowledge surely essential in making fully informed decisions.

For me, the following paragraphs stand out: -

“Consult statutory or internal consultees only where it is necessary to do so. Decisions should not be delayed in order to secure advice from a statutory or internal consultee beyond their statutory deadlines unless there is insufficient information to make the decision or more detailed advice may enable an approval rather than a refusal[.]” DM3 1 d

That seems to suggest that, if there is a delay in receiving a response from a consultee, then it may possibly result in an application being approved without considering the full facts. “Act in haste, repent at leisure”? The provision should be resisted. If pursued, then it should be counterbalanced by making it easier to challenge an approved application should pertinent information come to light. Currently it is far easier to appeal against a refusal than against an approval.

“Decision makers should be satisfied that this [Heritage Impact] accurately reflects the effects on heritage assets caused by the proposals.” HE5 4

This poses a significant challenge. It is quite possible that the planning authority will not have either the resources, specialist skills or local historical knowledge to judge whether the impact assessment is accurate or not, especially if the decision-making

officer might be living 50 miles away.

Other areas of concern cover telecommunications, clean energy and water infrastructure. Telecommunications will no longer be required to have “*sympathetic design and camouflage*” but merely to “*minimise the visual impact*”. (A watering down likely to mean that 18m high 5G masts get approved.) Applications for renewables or electricity network infrastructure will no longer have to demonstrate a need for them or to confine themselves to areas “*identified as suitable for them*”. Nor should applications for water infrastructure developments “*be required to demonstrate [any] need*” for them.

All this invites an alarming free-for-all. If the declining profitability in agriculture continues, it can only mean the entire countryside in our local area may be covered in solar farms and big Battery Electric Storage Systems.

The proposals to curtail both national and local voluntary amenity societies from involvement in individual planning applications, together with the proposed revised NPPF in its current form, represent a significant threat to conservation areas – by the pursuit of a greater level of presumed consent for any planning application that ticks the right boxes.

In other words, it seems, a complete reversal of what Duncan Sandys, the former Government Housing Minister, sought to achieve when he founded the

Civic Trust in 1947. Following the passing of the Civic Amenities Act in 1967, he said, “*In this age of steel and glass constructionTh[is] Act requires local authorities to give notice before approving new development in a Conservation Area which could detrimentally affect its character. This will give the public, and in particular the amenity societies, the chance to express their opinion and to make their influence felt.*”

If the Government’s attempt to remove public participation in the planning process succeeds, not only will it be a reversal of one of the greatest achievements of the Civic Movement, but it will be at complete odds with statements by various Government Ministers that they want to put communities at the heart of local decision making.

Civic societies are not nimbies. We are not against new development, but any new development, whether within a conservation area or outside of one, must be well designed and planned and in the right place and should meet a public need. **It is not the planning system that is holding up new development.** It is the fact that many new developments, once approved, are then not built. Is that the fault of the planning system or the fault of developers?

The new proposed NPPF in its current form goes against what the Civic Movement stands for and will be roundly rejected by many. **John Bland**

MUCH APPRECIATED

- **SHDC** for the in-depth restoration of the War Memorial (Grade I listed) in Ayscoughfee Gardens. It was in much greater need of attention than was apparent at a casual glance. Damp had been a destructive problem, it turned out, for many years, partly through the misguided use of cement in previous repair work instead of lime mortar, thus preventing the pavilion from ‘breathing’, and partly through the raising of the footpath levels over the years, resulting in rain draining towards the building instead of away from it. Woodworm infestation was also found to have seriously weakened one of the main roof beams. Some of the names were barely legible, the black paint having flaked away. There was much to be done. And it was done – in time for the Armistice Day Service.

- **SHDC** for thoughtfully capturing the restoration work as it proceeded on an informative and

beautifully made video. This will shortly be available to the general public, showing on a permanent loop in Ayscoughfee Hall Museum. It will also be available for societies or organisations that might like to include it as part of their year’s programme for members. Just contact Marc Wheelan at: marc.wheelan@sholland.gov.uk

- **Spalding Library** for having a copy of Tim Skelton’s *Lutyens and the Great War* available.

- **Posters and fliers** about the town advertising our forthcoming AGM and guest speaker’s illustrated talk on *The Georgians*. The fliers and posters have a sort of smoky or earthy red background. This is ‘Pompeian Red’, a widely used colour, the Georgian Group says, on the walls of Georgian drawing rooms, as it was felt to make a particularly effective background for the display of prints and pictures. (Another nugget from our Chairman’s research!)

PASTPRESENTPOSSIBLE

arts & culture

Past Present Possible to Lead Major Heritage Celebration of BBQ 67, the World's First Music Festival

Past Present Possible, a newly formed cultural collective working across the arts, heritage and community sectors, has successfully passed the first stage of a six-figure funding bid to celebrate the legacy of BBQ 67, possibly the world's first music festival, held in Spalding in 1967.

With the 60th anniversary of the landmark event approaching in 2027, the project will honour BBQ 67's pioneering place in music history while creating meaningful opportunities for future generations.

Led by a team with extensive experience in cultural delivery and community engagement, Past Present Possible is developing an ambitious programme that will celebrate the festival's heritage, record and share the personal stories of those who were there, and build a lasting legacy inspired by the original spirit of the event.

The proposed programme includes:

- **Collecting memories, photographs and memorabilia** from artists, organisers and audiences who experienced BBQ 67
- **Heritage and storytelling projects** – Spalding's role in shaping modern music festivals
- **Opportunities for emerging musicians** rooted in the festival's ethos of innovation and creativity
- **Support for young people** interested in learning about and accessing the live music and events industry
- **Community-focused activities and events** that bring people together through music

Taking place before more widely known festivals, BBQ 67 put Spalding at the forefront of a global cultural movement, yet its story remains largely untold. This project aims to change that — celebrating local pride while recognising the event's international significance.

A spokesperson for Past Present Possible said:

"BBQ 67 is an extraordinary moment in cultural history, and it happened here in Spalding. This project is about honouring the people and stories behind it, while using that legacy to inspire creativity, opportunity and connection today."

As plans progress to the next funding stage, Past Present Possible is inviting local residents, musicians, former attendees, young people and supporters to get involved.

Anyone who attended BBQ 67, has memories or materials to share, or simply wants to show their support is encouraged to get in touch via the [Past Present Possible Facebook page](#), where updates will be shared and conversations are already beginning,

More announcements will follow as the project develops towards the 60th anniversary celebrations in 2027

Chairman: John Bland, 36 Park Avenue, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1QX. 01775 762150
Secretary: Marian Boxall, 78a Edinbough Drive, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2RT. 01775 725293
Treasurer: Melvyn Price, 3 Morus Close, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2QL. 01775 722908
Newsletter: John Charlesworth, 37 Regent Street, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2YN. 01775 768303
Registered Charity Number 259956 **Website** www.spaldingcivicsociety.org.uk

