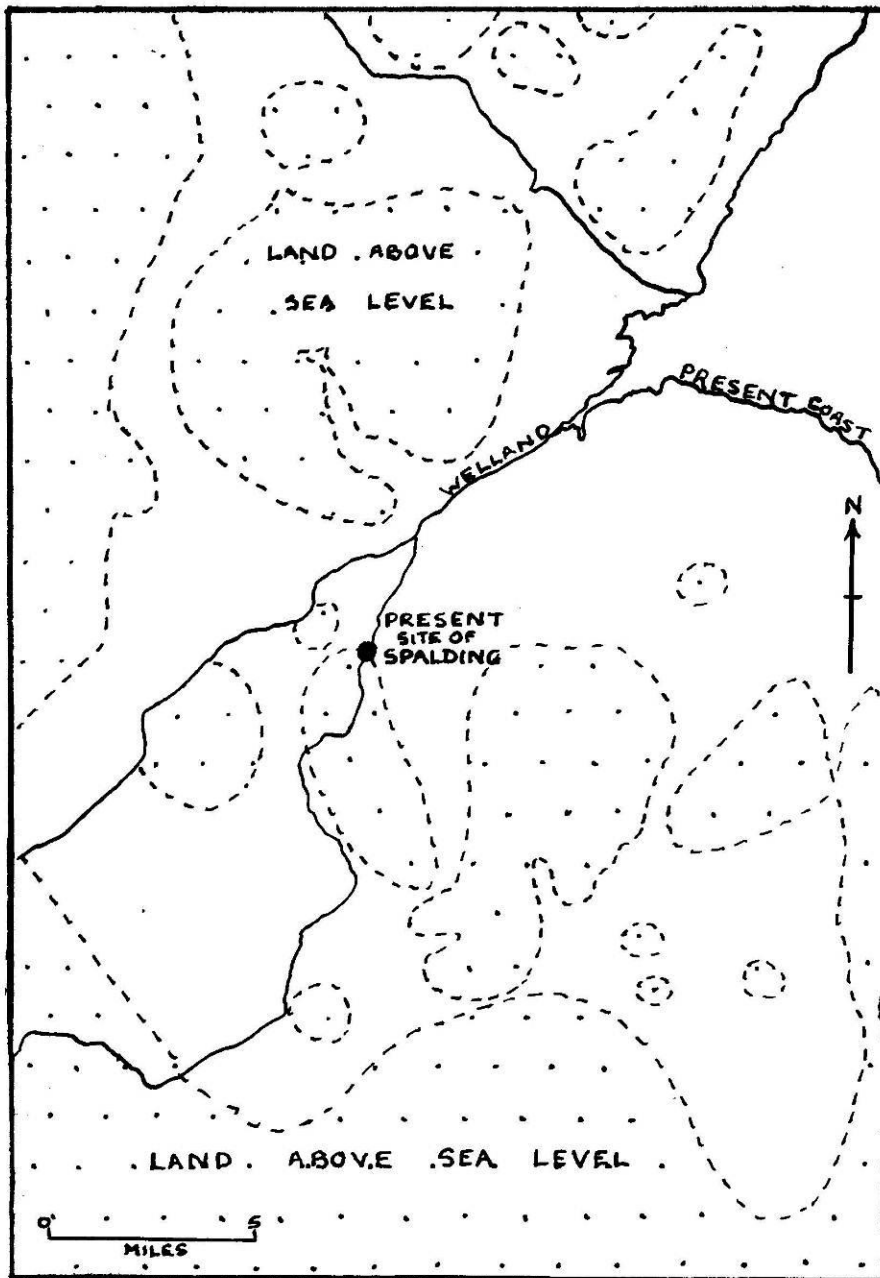


# **SPALDING - THE EVOLUTION OF A FENLAND TOWN BY BERNARD CLARK**

<b>PART ONE</b>	<b>Early Days</b>
<b>PART TWO</b>	<b>Winds of Change</b>
<b>PART THREE</b>	<b>Age of Steam</b>
<b>PART FOUR</b>	<b>Town in Transition</b>



**THE SPALDING AREA    MAP I.**  
**ABOUT 200 A.D.**

## Early Days

There is little information about Spalding in Roman times, the so-called Dark Ages and the Middle Ages, and what there is so fragmentary that it is impossible to give a coherent account of the town's development. However, recent work by B.B. Simmons and other archaeologists suggests that Spalding may have been a Roman settlement. Any earlier occupation than this seems unlikely as the Fens as a whole appear to have been uninhabited in pre-Roman times.

Map 1 shows the coastline of the Spalding area in the second century A.D. as suggested in the light of present knowledge by Simmons from archaeological evidence. At this time the site of Spalding lay on the margins of salt marsh and sea, and it is possible that sediments laid down primarily by the sea may have built up to form a low ridge. Examination of present contours (see Map 2) shows a rough linear form lying across the course of the river which would tend to support this hypothesis. In fact Spalding's site may actually have been induced by man by the construction of a Roman bank which accelerated deposition to form the ridge and eventually covered the bank.

As accretion continued the salt marshes finally became dry land, and by the fourth century Spalding lay on a zone of silt running in a huge arc around the shores of the Wash, which were still some miles inland from the present coastline. Because of the previous deposition the actual site was higher than the surrounding lands and so provided a better drained area for building. Examination of Map 2 shows that the highest land is some ten feet or more above the general level of the area and runs along the line of the present Half Place, Market Place and Church Street. The position of High Bridge along this axis is obviously no accident as the drier land would provide the necessary firm foundation. It is possible to see the rise in level today by standing at the junction of Halmer Gate and Church Street and looking north west along Church Street towards High Bridge. Similarly, at the other end of the axis, a distinct slope upwards may be seen from Winfrey Avenue looking south east towards Swan Street.

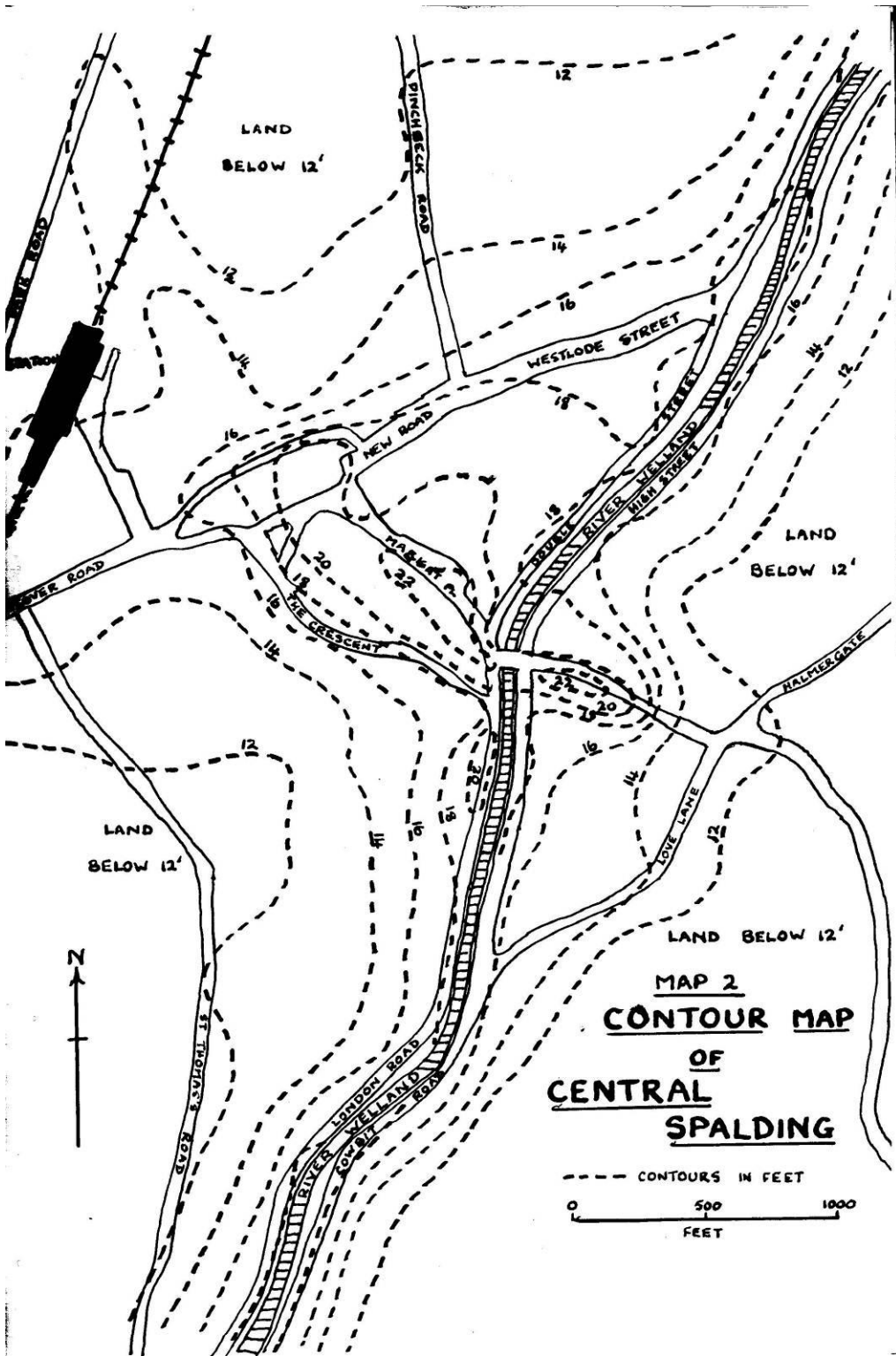
If a Roman settlement existed it is reasonable to assume that it occupied the axial zone, possibly within the area bounded by the twenty foot contour shown on Map 2, and controlled some form of crossing of the Welland, perhaps a ford or bridge.

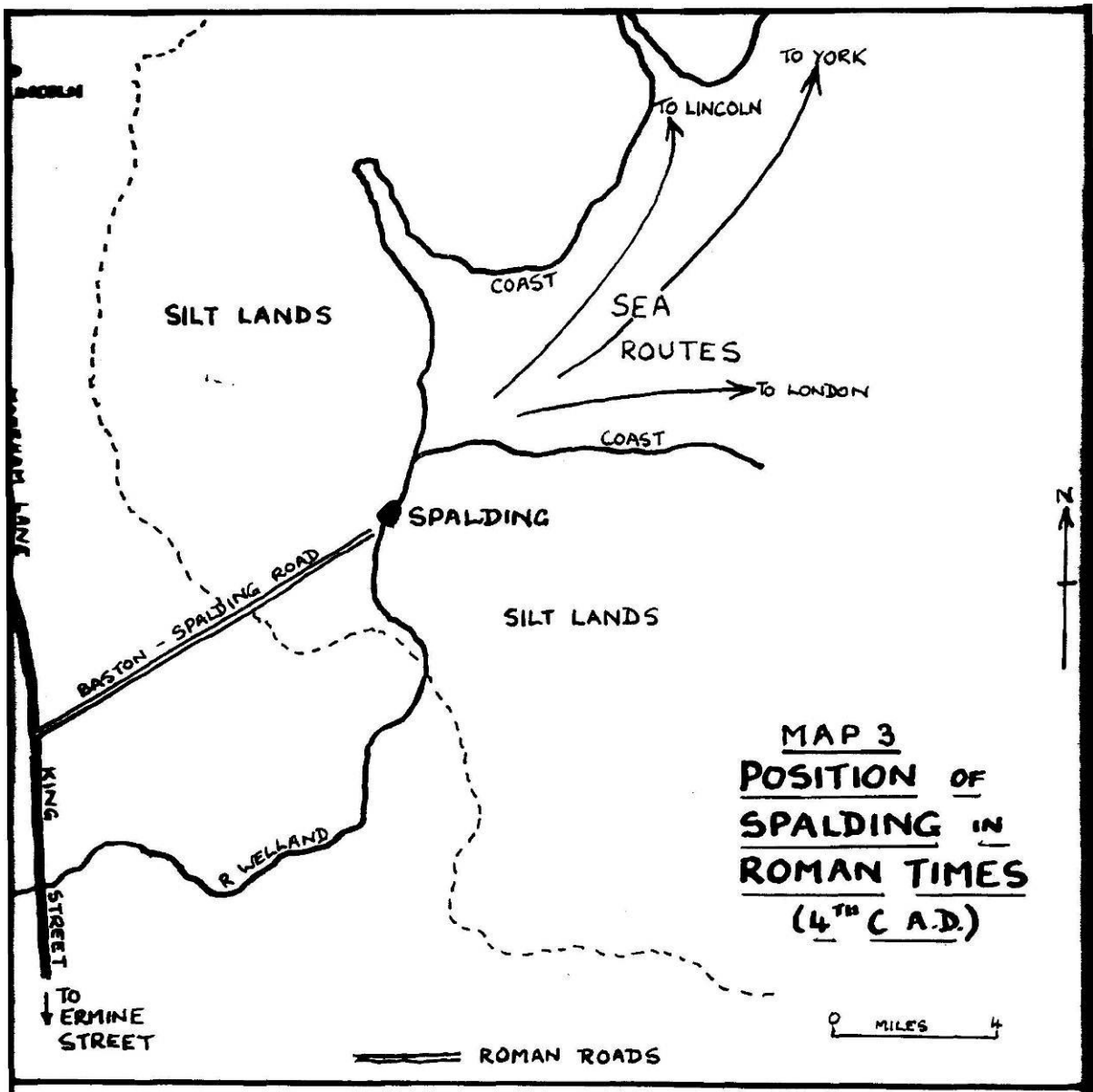
Direct evidence of such a settlement is unfortunately absent, but there is secondary information which suggests that a Roman Spalding did exist. In the first place it is known that a Roman road called the Baston Outgang or Elrichrode led from the present Baston towards Spalding (see Map 3). Its route is still followed by a modern road for about three miles to Deeping Fen Farm, the remainder being traceable to Pepper Hill Farm as a gravel causeway. If the line of the road is projected towards the north east it leads almost exactly towards Spalding. To the south west the road connected with King Street and other known Roman roads running on the higher and drier lands west of the Fens.

Furthermore, it is known that on the silt lands around the Wash a thriving peasant farming area existed in Roman times. Cereals were grown, but stock was probably more important, particularly cattle. Sheep were also reared and it has been suggested that there were sheep farms on the salt marshes in the late first century, while cattle ranching became dominant in the third and fourth centuries on moist fen pastures. The salt industry was also important towards the end of the first century.

If, as seems likely, the Spalding area produced quantities of peat, salt, hides, wool and grain in Roman times, under Roman direction, then collecting centres must have been established. J.B. Whitwell in his book on Roman Lincolnshire suggests Whaplode as a possibility, but Spalding, some five miles to the west, would seem more likely because it was located near a number of Roman discoveries, had a higher and drier site, and most important, was situated on the navigable Welland (see Map3). Produce from the surrounding area could be transported by water to Lincoln via the Witham, to York via the Humber and Ouse, and to London by sea and the Thames. It is indeed possible that Spalding was the *Salinae Gyrviorum* mentioned by Ptolemy, although this is somewhat speculative.

On the whole, on general grounds, therefore, quite a good case can be made for the existence of a Roman settlement at Spalding in spite of the lack of precise evidence. However, with the breakdown of Roman control in the fifth century many existing settlements may well have been deserted. Drainage works were not maintained, and a rise in sea level may have occurred so that the land again became waterlogged. This could account for the fact that Roman sites have been found under five feet of silt on the seaward side of Spalding. In any case if Spalding existed it may have become uninhabited for the following three centuries.





By the seventh century, however, the silt fens were probably settled by Anglo-Saxon invaders. In the case of the Spalding area groups probably sailed up the Welland and then spread out laterally over the silt area. The initial landing may well have been at Spalding itself where firm ground was first encountered. Thus a tribe known as the Spaldas or Spalde were mentioned in the seventh century Tribal Hidage. They were located in the Fens of Huntingdonshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire, and the name Spalding may be derived from 'Spaldingas' i.e. descendants of the Spaldas or members of the tribe of Spaldas.

The first written record of Spalding is in a charter given to the monks of Crowland by King Ethelbald in A.D.716. It refers to the bounds of the lands of Crowland extending 'as far as the buildings of Spalding' so that it can be fairly safely assumed that the site of Spalding was still settled, or had been re-settled, by the beginning of the eighth century. The houses would probably have been clay mixed with straw, hay or cow dung, or possibly of turf, owing to the lack of timber, and no doubt stood on the highest land along the Market Place - Church Street axis already mentioned. It is not known whether a bridge existed at that time, but it is quite possible that there was one.

A further mention of Spalding occurs in a charter dated A.D.868 which refers to the 'vill of Spaldelying', and by the time of the Norman Conquest the settlement was probably of some consequence. A priory had been founded there in 1052, just before the Conquest, by the brother of Lady Godiva and Domesday Book records that Earl Algar had nine carucates of land there. (A carucate was approximately 100 acres). After the Conquest the selection of Spalding Manor for Ivo Taillebois, the nephew of William the Conqueror, indicates that it must have had some importance. He built a wooden castle there with a moat and drawbridge, and when he died, was buried at Spalding. The castle was on rather lower land than the town (about fourteen feet above sea level), but was still above the general level of the surrounding land. The name remains in the Castle Playing Fields, but no trace of the building remains today.

After the Conquest the Priory was taken over by Benedictine monks from Anjou and until the Dissolution of the Monasteries appears to have been the dominant influence in the area. About 1200 the Priory lands occupied an area of about thirty acres within the triangle formed by the River Welland, the Westlode (an ancient drain) and the Market Place - Church Street axis. Almost all this area is over eighteen feet above sea level and forms the historic core of the town.

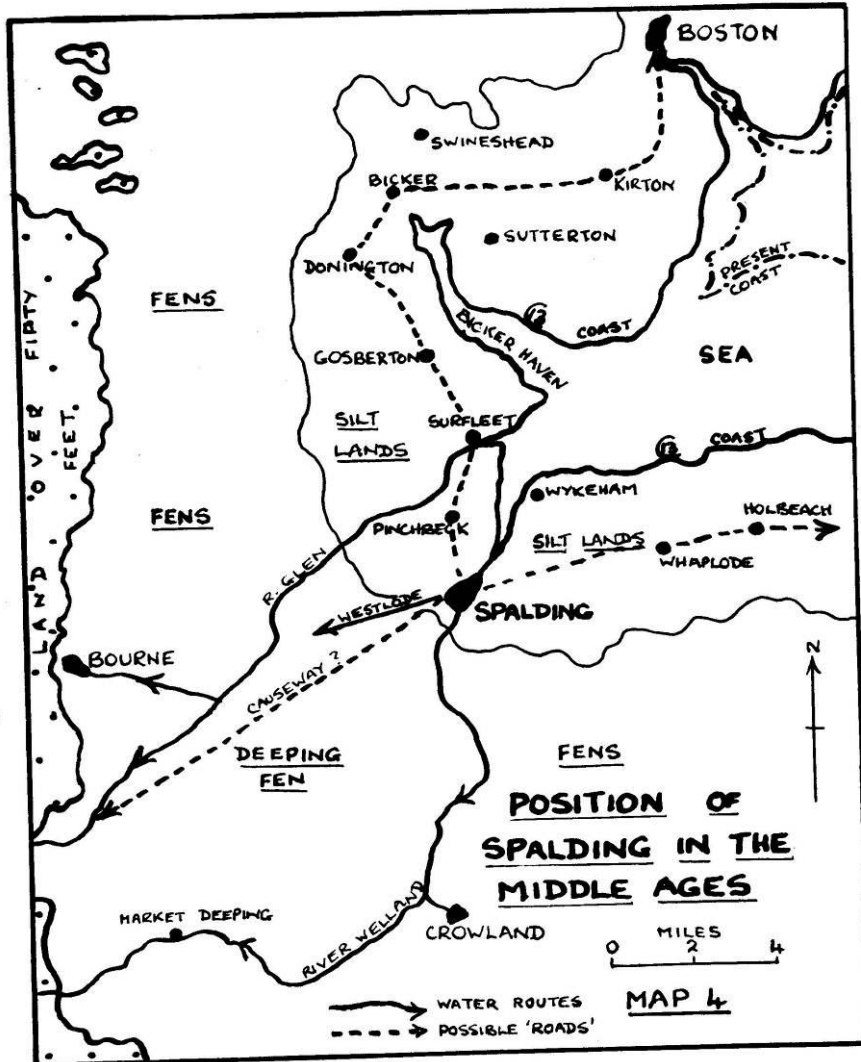
The Westlode ran along the present line of Westlode street, New Road and Winsover Road (Photograph 1). 'Lode' seems to be derived from the Old English 'lad' meaning water-course. It was possibly crossed by a bridge near the present Red Lion Street. The Welland probably had an ancestor of the present High Bridge, and to the south west the Priory lands were bounded by a moat and later a wall. (In fact in 1333 the Prior of Spalding sought permission from Edward III to strengthen and crenellate the wall against cattle rustlers from Deeping.)

Under successive Priors there was a general increase in the prosperity of the area and Spalding was the collecting and distributing centre for the produce. It appears to have been the only town in the area with a market in 1086. The Domesday Survey reads, 'There is a market worth forty shillings yearly', and in 1280 the monks and townsmen could have shops on the two bridges i.e. High Bridge and the bridge over the Westlode.

As the monastic lands continued to be improved, possibly following reclamation organised by the Priors, the area became richer and Spalding was able to utilise its advantages of location to become the leading market centre (see Map 4). There was communication by water with Crowland along the Welland (this link remained until the seventeenth century), with Bourne, possibly along the Westlode or the River Glen, and by sea with Boston, Hull and the north east coast, and London and the south east coast. There is also mention of a causeway at this time, but this was very difficult to keep in a usable condition. There were also 'roads' north through Gosberton and Donington to Boston, and east through Weston, Whaplode, and Holbeach to Wisbech, although they were probably little better than tracks and virtually impassable in winter.

A wide range of products was carried, mainly by water, and many of them passed through or came to the market at Spalding. The toll list of 1281 mentions sacks of wool, tuns of wine, firewood, turves and coal,

and the list of 1336 shows a much greater range, indicating the increase in trade which took place at this time. Items included corn, malt, horses, oxen, cattle skins, fresh and salted meat, sheep, cloth of various types, casks of wine, loads of honey, sacks of wool, salt, steel, cheese, butter and fish, including herrings. The latter are particularly noteworthy since there was a herring quay at the end of the present Herring Lane where the Prior of Spalding's fleet landed its catch (see Photograph 2).



During this period i.e. from the Norman Conquest to the Dissolution there is little information about the size of Spalding, both in area and numbers of people. It would be reasonable to assume, however, that houses were built first along the Market Place - Church Street axis, as this was the highest area, through which a road or roads presumably ran from the site of High Bridge to the bridge over the Westlode. In fact the present Broad Street appears as Crakepel Causey in a charter of 1265. The Priory buildings were no doubt situated along this axis too, although it is thought that the only building remaining today is the Prior's Oven, a former monastic prison.

As the town became more prosperous further settlement was probably established along the Westlode and the two approach roads. This expansion is substantiated by the numbers of tenants which rose from 73 in 1086 to 421 in 1260, nearly a six-fold increase. In fact the thirteenth century may well have been the period of Spalding's most rapid growth during the medieval period (see Map 5).

Three centuries later in 1563, twenty-four years after the Dissolution, Diocesan Population Returns were made for the whole of Lincolnshire, but showed only 154 households in Spalding compared with 200 in Pinchbeck, 228 in Kirton and 471 in Boston. Holbeach had 147, so was almost equal in size with Spalding which appeared to have suffered a relative decline compared with surrounding settlements.

Since Spalding was the only one of these affected by the Dissolution, apart from Crowland, which had even fewer households, it is possible that after the monks were evicted a transitional period of neglect ensued before stable land ownership was established. As a result the fertile well-farmed lands around Spalding may well have deteriorated, producing a period of stagnation in the town. It is possible, however, that during the later years of monastic control, independent lay economic activity may have been retarded by the Priors themselves, in their own interests.

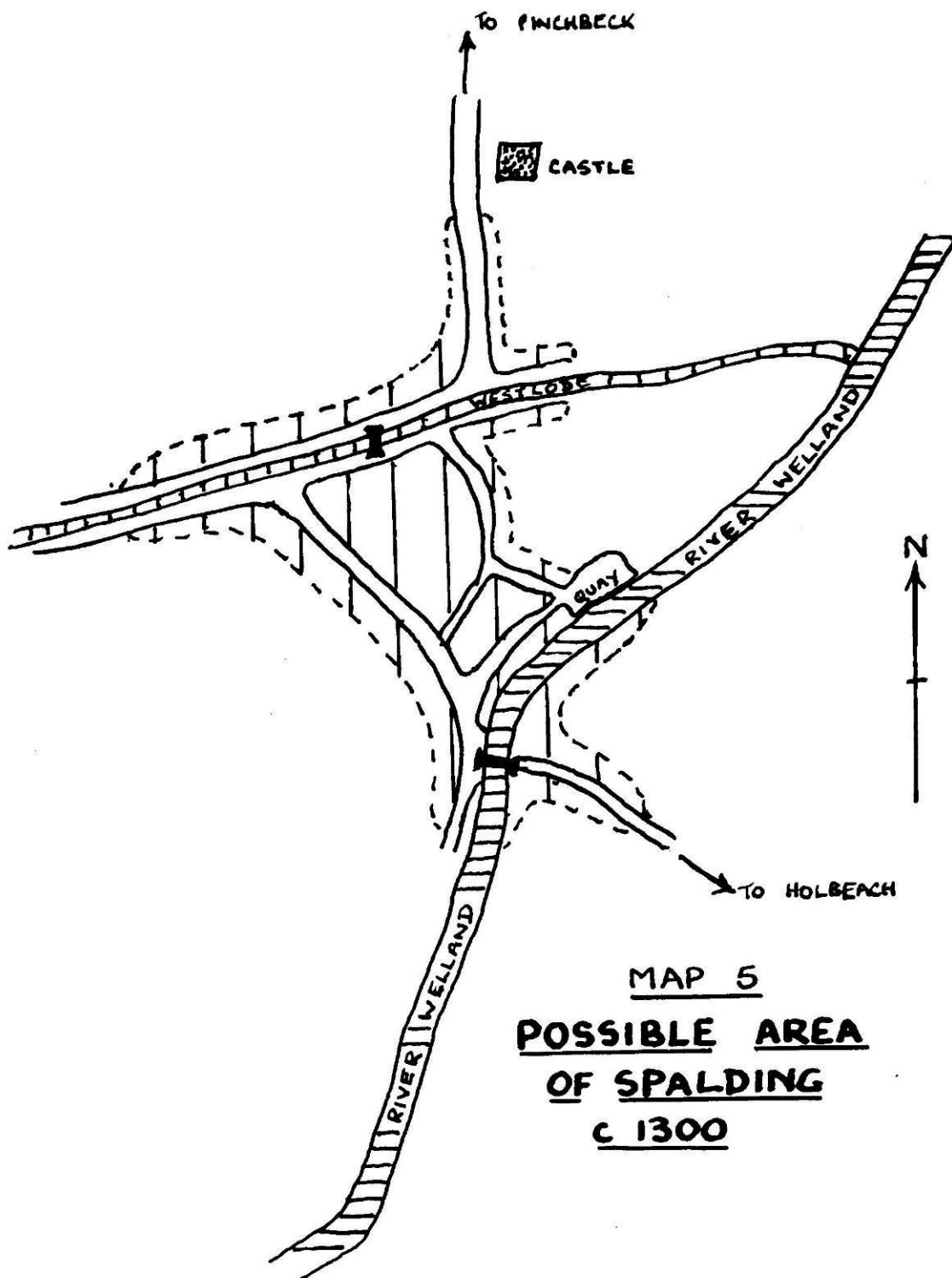
Certainly, at the Dissolution the Priory appears to have been one of the wealthiest houses in Lincolnshire. One source gives the annual revenues of the Priory at about 1535 as £933, not far short of £1093 at Crowland. Furthermore, after the Dissolution, pensions were granted to heads of religious houses on the basis of the wealth of the house and the time spent on religion. The former Prior of Spalding and Abbot of Crowland were at the top of the list in Lincolnshire with £133.6s.8d. per annum when an annual income of over £20 per year was considered relative wealth.

Whatever the reasons for Spalding's decline in the sixteenth century there seems to have been a minor revival at the beginning of the seventeenth because by 1619 the number of houses had increased to 288, possibly reflecting a return to stability. However little is known about the town during this century. It can be fairly assumed, though, that it remained as a local collecting and distributing centre for the produce of the surrounding area, namely cattle and sheep, wool, hemp and flax, as well as a port, conveniently located for the export of wool to the manufacturing areas of East Anglia and the West Riding.

Even at this time, however, the port had its difficulties. In 1634 travellers passing through Spalding reported that not only was the bridge over the Welland 'pulled down', but that 'the river had not soe much water in it, as would drown a mouse'. Fortunately a decree from the Court of Sewers, confirmed in 1632, began to be carried out in 1634 and six hundred men were set to work widening the Welland to 40 feet from Fosdyke to Deeping St. James. This scheme was not primarily for navigation, but was part of a larger plan for the draining of Deeping Fen, an area closely associated with Spalding, since the main outlet for excess water from the Fen was via the Welland.

Later in the century a further scheme was carried out from 1664-1674 which had as its main aim the draining of 10,000 acres in Deeping Fen. The drainers, however, had to keep the Welland navigable and maintain the banks from Brother House to High Bridge, so that Spalding's maritime activities undoubtedly benefited.





MAP 5  
POSSIBLE AREA  
OF SPALDING  
c 1300

 BRIDGES

0                      220                      440  
 ───────────────────  
 YARDS

## WINDS OF CHANGE 1700-1850

By 1700 change was in the air. It was becoming generally recognised that drainage could transform the Fens into a vast farming area no longer subject to periodic inundations, and provide the basis for a more stable economy. No doubt the merchants of Spalding were well aware of the benefits they would reap, not only from a general increase in productivity, but from improvements to the Welland which were a necessary part of any drainage scheme in the area.

Significantly, at the beginning of this period, the Gentlemen's Society of Spalding was formed in 1710 by Maurice Johnson. The aims of the members were not only social but cultural and they were particularly concerned with the study of scientific and literary subjects. Its inauguration indicated a quickening of intellectual activity which no doubt spilled over into the more mundane activities of trade and commerce. One of their members was John Grundy who produced a detailed map of the town in 1732 which he presented to the Society (see Map 6).

The map shows that the majority of the houses were still along the Market Place - Church Street axis, but there were also ribbons of settlement along Double Street and High Street alongside the Welland. These were undoubtedly associated with Spalding's function as a port as they overlooked the main quays. Double Street may owe its name to the fact that it was the only riverside road with houses on both sides (see Photograph 3). Above High Bridge, which was too low for sea-going ships to pass, settlement was much more scattered and principally close to a footbridge on the site now occupied by the Victoria Bridge near the junction of Love Lane and Churchgate. It was known as Dr. Dinham's Bridge and was replaced in 1837. The present bridge was built in 1868 (see Photograph 4).

A third settlement ribbon alongside the Westlode made up the triangular area of the town at this time. Houses were virtually continuous on the north bank along Westlode Side and the present Albion Street, but there were gaps along the south side owing to a number of transverse streets and a large garden. Three bridges were indicated; one opposite the Town Hall; a second at the end of the present Red Lion Street; and a third at the end of Double Street.

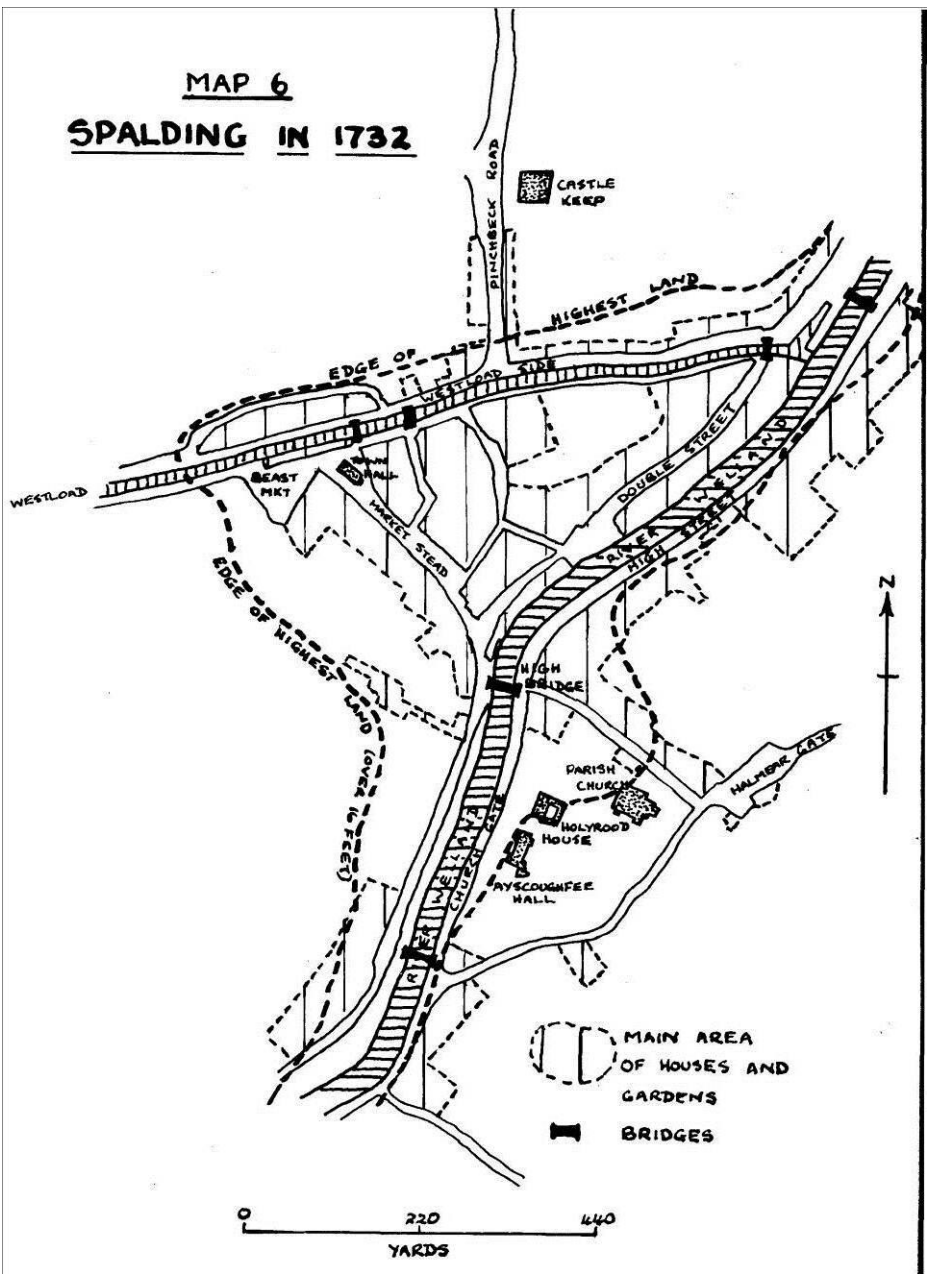
The sixteen foot contour has been superimposed on Map 6 and shows that a strong relief control existed at time as almost all the houses lay on or above that height. It is interesting to note the coincidence of the three major buildings i.e. the Church, Holyrood House and Ayscoughfee Hall with the contour. No doubt even in 1732 the drainage of the area still left much to be desired and the absence of settlement on the lower lands below sixteen feet is an indication of this. The castle by this time was presumably a ruin, although the keep is still shown on the map.

The number of houses on the map (about 380) suggests that some limited growth had taken place over the previous century. Spalding therefore, must have established itself more firmly as a collecting and distributing centre, based mainly on its function as a port. Merchants in the town passed goods up and down the river and also traded in locally produced goods such as cattle, sheep, oxen, hemp, flax, cereals, coleseed and rape. There were five annual fairs held on April 27 (stock, hemp and flax), June 29 (stock, hemp, flax and horses), August 25 (horses), September 25 (horned cattle and other stock, hemp, flax and other merchandise), and on December 6 (general).

Stock and goods were sold in various streets in the town. The present Sheep Market is shown on the 1732 map as the Beast Market, and animals were presumably killed in the nearby Shambles adjacent to the Town Hall. Horses were sold in Osses Lane and pigs in Hogg Market, both forming the present Red Lion Street. Butter and general produce were sold in the Market Place (called Market Stead on the map), and hemp and flax round the Town Hall, although this weekly market seems to have fluctuated in importance.

It is likely that the main factor limiting Spalding's development at this time was transport, which was primarily by water and was laborious and slow. The main line of communication was along the Welland which was sometimes navigable as far as Stamford for barges, and as far as High Bridge in Spalding for sea-going ships. Very often, though, goods such as coal were loaded into barges at Boston Scalp (see Map 7) from boats bound for Boston, and then carried up the river to Spalding. Upstream from High Bridge goods were carried by lighters which usually travelled in groups of four and took three or four days to reach Stamford. A particular difficulty was the variability of the river and, not surprisingly, several attempts were made after 1750 by local merchants and landowners to improve the channel, but without much success.

MAP 6  
SPALDING IN 1732



Much movement elsewhere was also by water, along rivers such as the Glen to Bourne, and no doubt along the drains. A map dated 1763 in the possession of the Gentlemen's Society shows numerous houses along drains, with no apparent roads except along Horsegate Roft, on the present line of the A16. Water courses of this type shown on Map 7 include the South forty Foot drain, the Old Hammond Beck and Risegate Water, and it is quite possible that they were used for the transport of goods and people. An undated booklet, probably produced between 1750 and 1770 called 'The Curiosities, Natural and Artificial, of the Island of Great Britain'

mentions that 'A little north west of Spalding is Gosberton.....which has a port for barges'. These must presumably have sailed up Risegate Water to reach the Gosberton area. Similarly the Old Hammond Beck and the South Forty Foot could have been reached via the River Glen. A hazard to such navigation, however, seems to have been the presence of numerous fish traps set up by local inhabitants on many minor water courses.

If transport by water left much to be desired, movement by land was even more restricted. Some 'roads' did exist, but they were rough and rutted tracks in summer and muddy quagmires in winter. The 1763 map shows the two long-established roads north to Boston and east to Holbeach, but there appeared to be no direct land route south to Crowland, although a short road ran along the edge of the Welland as far as Cowbit. There was also another road to Cowbit via Matmore Gate and Low Fields. The remaining land connection was with Market Deeping via either the west bank of the Welland (now Cradge Bank), or along Horsegate Roft. Bourne could only be reached by water until the 1820's.

By 1750 it was becoming increasingly clear that if Spalding was to benefit from the increasing productivity of the newly drained lands, an improvement in communications was vitally necessary. This could be effected by improving navigation on the Welland and by building a network of adequate roads.

Various schemes to widen and deepen the Welland were carried out during the period 1750 to 1850, but their success can be judged by the fact that by 1822 only vessels of less than fifteen tons could reach Stamford, and by 1863 the river was only navigable as far as Market Deeping. At Spalding in 1802 there were over seventy barges, of from ten to sixty tons, yet some fifty years later after continued work, in 1856, it was still only possible for vessels of the same size to reach the town. By this time the railways were arriving and the writing was already on the wall as far as the port was concerned.

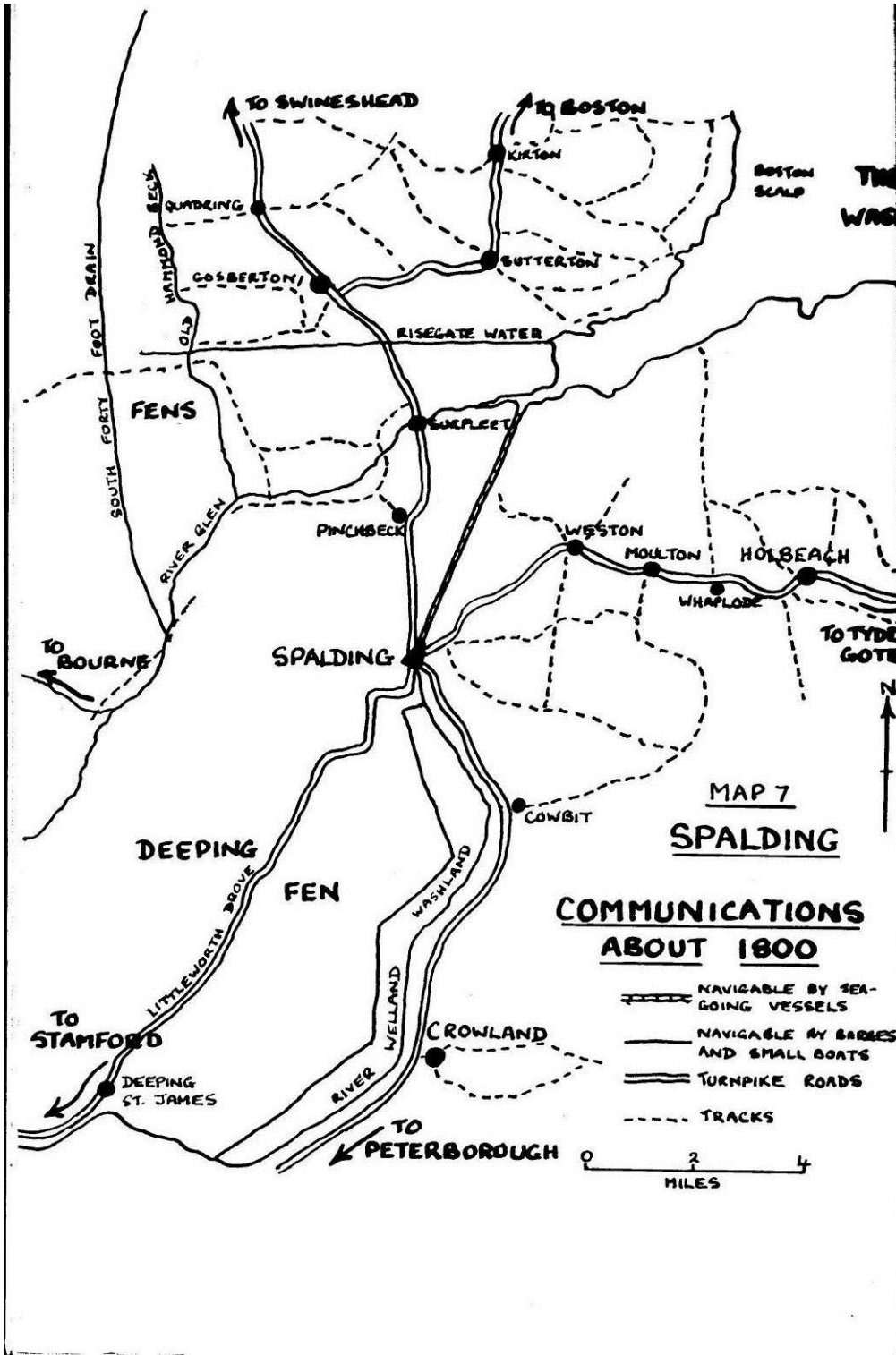
Road construction, however, was more successful and was initiated after 1750 when groups of local citizens was to obtain permission to improve or construct a stated length of road by a private Act of Parliament. When the Act was passed, the group paid for the necessary works and then set up toll bars to collect revenues which were paid by all road users. The money was then used for the upkeep of the road and the surplus, if any, retained as profit by the group.

The first Act was obtained in 1759 for eleven and a half miles of road from Spalding to Donington, and a toll bar was set up in the present Pinchbeck Road where it was joined by Stepping Stones Lane (now King's Road). The second Act was in 1763 for six miles along Littleworth Drove (see Map 7) leading to Deeping St. James and the toll bar was near the present Little London bridge. A year later the third Act was passed for the road from Spalding through Holbeach as far as the county boundary at Tydd Gote. This was followed by a further Act in 1795 for a road through Cowbit towards Crowland as far as Brotherhouse Bar, and the first toll bar was situated just north of Cowbit.

The fact that an Act was passed did not necessarily mean that the work was done. Sometimes it was not completed successfully because of lack of funds or unexpected difficulties in construction, so it is not surprising that the four roads mentioned did not raise equal amounts of revenue. In fact the Spalding-Tydd Gote one was the most successful.

On Map 7, which is based on a 'New Map of the County of Lincoln', dated 1808, the four turnpike roads are all shown leading from Spalding. The greater frequency of feeder tracks leading to the Spalding-Holbeach road indicate that it was more widely used than the others in the area, especially Littleworth Drove where there is a complete absence. There was still not road to Bourne, possibly because of construction difficulties across the fens west of Spalding.

Somewhat later, in the 1820's, further Acts were passed to improve Littleworth Drove and the road to Donington, an indication of their poor condition, in spite of the previous Acts. In addition, in 1823, the road towards Bourne was built for nearly six miles to the county boundary at Guthram Gowt, thus initiating the first land link westwards since Roman times.



*Westlode Street from the junction with Broad Street looking along the line of the former Westlode Drain*



*Remaining warehouses along the Welland Side dated 1880. Site of Prior of Spalding's herring quay to right*



*View north-east along Double Street*



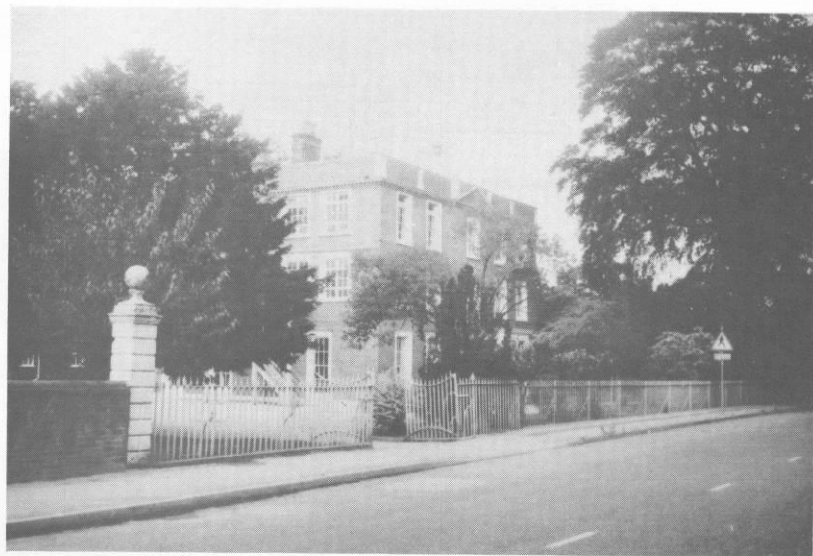
*Victorian Footbridge*



*Welland Terrace c. 1770*



*Welland Hall, now the Old High School c. 1805*





*Cottages and gentlemen's houses on London Road c. 1820. Gentlemen's houses on far right*



*Cottages on Winsover Road west of the junction with St. John's Road*



*Spalding railway station 1848*

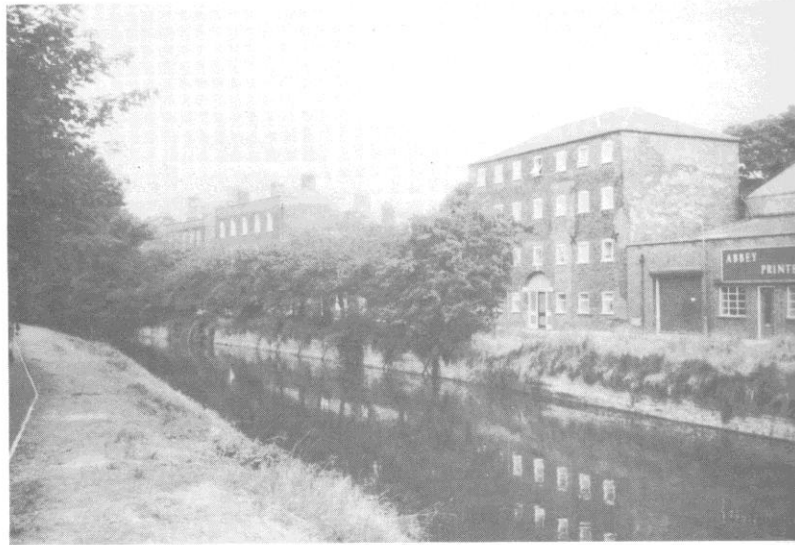




*Rear of cottages on Double Street overlooking the Welland and former area of quays*



*High Street and old quayside. Former merchants' houses and old warehouse now converted into flats*



*Cross Street. Post railway building. Cottages dated 1879*



*Inter-war local authority housing, Alexandra Road*



*Post World War Two local authority housing, Acacia Avenue, St. Paul's estate*



*Old people's houses, Lime Court off Alexandra Road*



*Windsor Estate,  
Balmoral Avenue*



*Avebury Gardens*



*Spalding's Industrial Zone,  
West Marsh Road*



On a later map of Spalding, held by the Gentlemen's Society and dated c.1840, all these turnpike roads are indicated as well as an extra one along Halmer Gate and the present route of the B1165. This is shown as leading to Weston Hills and the toll bar was at the junction of Halmer Gate and Barrel's Lane

(now Queen's Road). Their significance is that the present pattern of main roads leading to Spalding was fully established a hundred and fifty years ago, in a more leisurely age, when the transport of bulky goods was still by water. From this fact stem the difficulties of road transport Spalding is experiencing today.

As a result of the construction of the turnpike roads, transport to and from Spalding at the time, by road, was able to increase. Local carriers linked Spalding with the surrounding rural area and usually worked on Tuesday and sometimes Saturday. They arrived at various inns in the town at about 9 a.m. and departed about 3 p.m., serving an area extending north to Donington, east to Long Sutton, south to Crowland, south west to Market Deeping and west to Bourne. To this day, in fact, the majority of shoppers from outside Spalding travel in from the same approximate area.

The long distance carriers operated for the first half of the nineteenth century and Gooch, in the 'History of Spalding', quotes rates for the carriage of goods by land to London in 1814. Heavy goods were sent by wagon, but smaller items and parcels went by coach or smaller forms of conveyance. However, when the railways arrived in the middle of the century competition was impossible and these carriers ceased to operate.

For passengers and some goods there were a number of coach services, the first of which ran from Boston via Spalding and Peterborough to London, before 1800. Coaching reached its peak in the 1830's, followed by a rapid decline when the railways arrived. Nevertheless, the fact that coaches could operate on the existing roads indicates that surfaces were suitable for such heavy vehicles, although travel, in winter especially, must have been very arduous. However they provided Spalding, for the first time, with relatively rapid links with places outside the Fens such as Leicester, Cambridge and London, as well as more local towns including Boston, Holbeach, Swineshead and King's Lynn(\*).

Thus the period 1700-1850 witnessed the draining of most of the Fens and the development of a productive agricultural system, as well as an improvement in communications unparalleled since Roman times. As a result Spalding no doubt had its fair share of the prosperity. It is possible to gauge the effects of these improvements to some extent, because from 1801 onwards reliable population figures were issued in census reports.

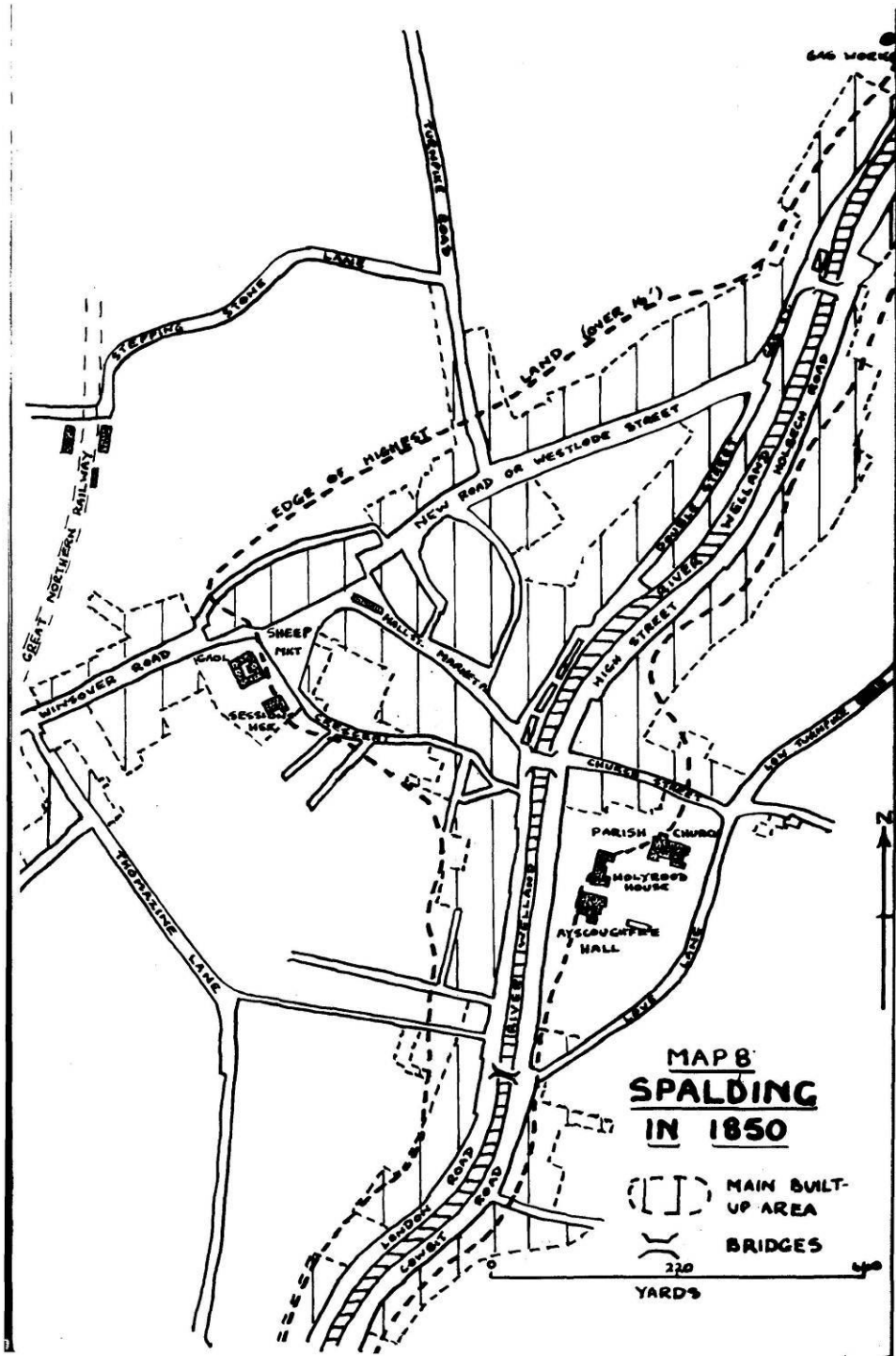
Population of Spalding	
Year	Total
1801	3296
1811	4330
1821	5207
1831	6497
1841	7778
1851	8829

These figures show a striking increase over the fifty year period and yet examination of the 1850 map (Map 8) indicates only a limited spread of the urban area since 1732. In fact most of the urban area still lay within the sixteen foot contour, apart from a line of houses along Winsover Road.

Actual urban extension was mainly confined to ribbon development along newly improved approach roads such as London Road, Holbeach Road (Commercial Road) and Bourne Road (Winsover Road). On London Road Welland Terrace was built (Photograph 5), probably in the 1770's, but possibly earlier, thus producing a continuous line of settlement as far as Welland Hall (now the Old High School) (Photograph 6).

A further extension was made in the 1820's as far as the present railway crossing by the construction of four gentlemen's houses and a group of cottages between Water Lane and the junction of Thomazine Lane and London Road. These houses and some of the cottages can be seen today (Photograph 7). In Bourne Road a similar ribbon of cottages had already loosely linked the hamlet of Windsover by 1801 and further infilling continued (Photograph 8). Directory figures confirm this expansion although they cannot be considered fully reliable, partly because of changes in street names.

(\* ) For a fuller account of coaching see 'Spalding, an Industrial History' by Wright



MAP B  
**SPALDING**  
 IN 1850

 MAIN BUILT-UP AREA  
 BRIDGES  
 220  
 YARDS

Numbers of Houses		
Street	1826	1846
High St/ Commercial Rd	32	94
London Rd	33	90
Winsover Road/ Bourne Rd	6	37

The Crescent was opened in 1843, but by 1850 not much building had taken place. (There were only three premises in 1846.)

Most of the increase in population, however, seems to have occurred in the existing built-up area and by 1850 severe congestion was the inevitable result. According to the Board of Health inspector who visited the town in 1851 there was overcrowding, squalor and misery which 'could scarcely be surpassed in the crowded lanes and alleys of the metropolis'. There was no system of drainage and often the houses formed the four sides of a square, enclosing a court with a large refuse heap in the centre. This dunghill consisted of filth from the houses and one or two privies were placed next to it to serve the needs of the inhabitants of the court.

People obtained their water from wells or pumps, and sometimes from the Welland. Better water was sold by water carriers but the poor could not afford the charges. The state of the streets was very bad and the only hard surface at the time was a cobbled area in the town centre. Conditions were particularly unpleasant in Westlode Street and Albion Street, and there was a stagnant ditch along the west side of Pinchbeck Street.

An investigation by local doctors about this time revealed that the most unhealthy area was along Bourne Road, the Sheep Market, Chapel Lane, Dead Man's Lane (Swan Street), Thomazine Lane, Winsover Road and Hawthorn Bank. The healthiest part consisted of Bridge Street, Market Place, Hall Street, Red Lion Street, and Crackpool Lane (Broad Street), which then made up the best part of the town. In 1851 the death rate for the town as a whole was 23 per thousand, two-fifths of these being infants under one year.

In spite of such a high death rate (approximately twice that of today), the birth rate was undoubtedly higher, and natural increase would account for part of Spalding's growth in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, many people are likely to have moved into the town attracted by the jobs available in the port, which must have been at its busiest at that period.

The following figures from White's Directory illustrate the growth in occupations which resulted

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>1826</i>	<i>1846</i>
		18
		42
Builders	8	20
Milliners	5	12
Tailors and drapers	11	23
Boot and shoe makers	10	26
Painters	6	12
Corn and coal merchants	3	16
Bankers	1	4

Work was not available for all, unfortunately, and the Spalding Union or Workhouse was built between 1831 and 1841. The inmates came not only from Spalding, but from the surrounding rural areas of Pinchbeck, Surfleet, Gosberton, Quadring, Cowbit, Weston and Moulton.

Thus between 1700 and 1850 Spalding was transformed from a quiet, spacious town and port, with a population of probably under 2000, into a cramped, insanitary, but vigorous trading centre for a fertile

agricultural area, with nearly 9000 inhabitants. It owed its prosperity primarily to the draining of Deeping Fen and the improvements in communications which allowed products to be brought into and distributed from the town. Its wealth came mainly from trade, but there were ancillary industries such as grain milling, boat building and rope making. During this period Spalding's essential character was established, and this is still apparent along the Welland side to those with an eye for the past. However, further changes were yet to come.

## AGE OF STEAM 1850-1939

From 1850 Spalding seems to have suffered from a period of relative stagnation up to the turn of the century, followed by steady progress until the outbreak of the Second World War.

### *Population of Spalding*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>
1871	9,111
1891	8,986
1911	10,308
1931	12,426

Up to 1891 Spalding's population remained virtually static, in sharp contrast to the increase of the first half of the century, and probably reflected economic conditions at the time. This depressed period can be attributed mainly to the arrival of the railway which led to the decline of the port. A contributory factor may have been depression of the last thirty years of the century in agriculture.

The first railway line was opened in 1848 and part of this is shown on the 1850 map, together with the station (Photograph 9). The approach at that time was along Stepping Stones Lane. It was a loop line of the Great Northern Railway from Peterborough via Spalding and Boston to Lincoln. The construction work was carried out very quickly because drainage was virtually complete and the flat land presented few difficulties. The main problems encountered were in the building of bridges over drains and rivers. Many of the early bridges were made of wood and it is ironic to note that large quantities of the necessary materials such as rails and sleepers were transported at first to Spalding by water.

During the thirty-four years following 1848 four other lines were built. In 1858 a single track branch line to Holbeach was opened involving the construction of a bridge over the Welland which was built near the present junction of Cowbit Road and Balmoral Avenue. The line was continued to Sutton Bridge in 1862 and finally connections with King's Lynn and Norfolk were completed in 1864. A second branch line was opened from Spalding in 1866 to Bourne; a third was built to March in 1867, needing a second bridge across the Welland; and the fourth was completed in 1882 to Sleaford and Lincoln, giving a more direct route than the original loop line.

The result of this flurry of construction was that by the end of the 1860's Spalding already had good rail connections with the surrounding area and beyond (see Map 9). Not surprisingly their immediate effect was to kill off the coaching trade which had disappeared by 1850 except for a mail cart which ran from Spalding to King's Lynn for a few more years. Only the local carriers, with their horse-drawn vehicles, were able to continue for any length of time (\*).

The more fundamental effect of the railways on Spalding, however, was the decline of the port. Bulky goods, in particular, which hitherto had to come through Spalding could now be carried by rail to their destination without reference to the town. Similarly, produce from the area could be loaded directly at the nearest station and so much of Spalding's trade was lost in a few years. Port dues fell from £6,000 in 1846 to £1000 in 1865, but in spite of the decline attempts were continued to improve the channel so that by 1892 vessels carrying up to 120 tons could reach Spalding. Alas! these efforts were in vain and by 1939 the port was dead.

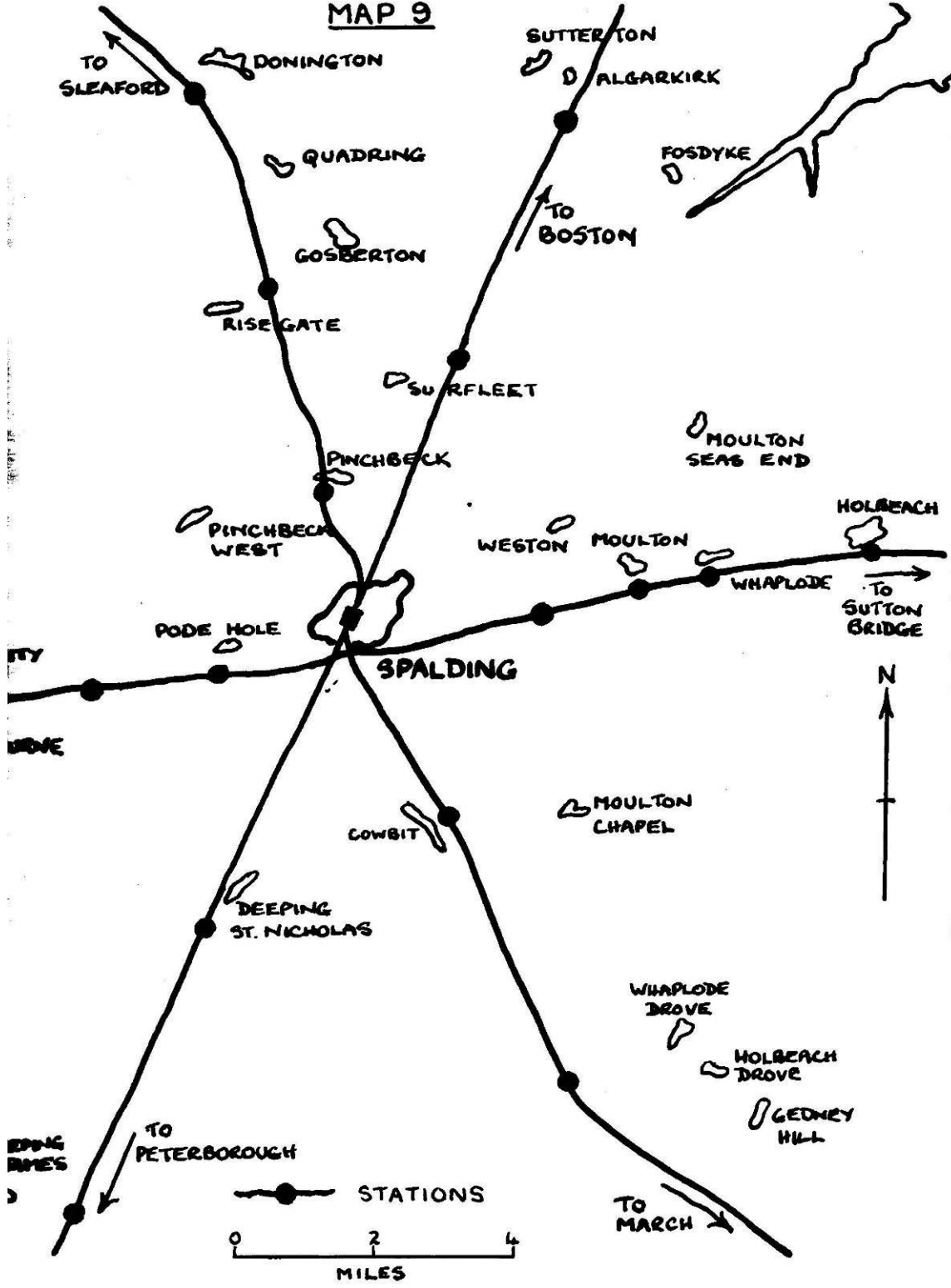
The loss of trade by the port was inevitably accompanied by a decrease in the number of jobs. The coal porters who lived in Double Street in 1851 (Photograph 10), the rope makers of New Road and Westlode Street, the watermen and boatmen of Holbeach Road and the various beer house and lodging housekeepers faced a bleak future, as well as the merchants of High Street (Photograph 11). No wonder then that the population actually declined in 1861 and 1891 and that some Spalding people emigrated to America during this time.

(\* ) *For a fuller account of the railways see Wright- "Spalding, an Industrial History".*



# VILLAGES SERVED BY TRAINS FROM SPALDING IN 1882

MAP 9



This stagnation is illustrated by the following directory figures for occupations in Spalding:

<i>Occupations</i>	1856	1882
Innkeepers	32	29
Beer housekeepers	24	20
Grocers	21	20
Coopers	3	1
Pawnbroker	1	1
Farmers	83	92

The continuance of the pawnbroker, who lived in Broad Street, is an ominous sign of the times, and the increase of the farmers suggests a move back to the land for a livelihood.

Yet, in spite of all, there was an encouraging development of building from the Crescent south westwards, between Winsover Road and London Road as far as the railway. This was the construction of Spalding's first housing estate, which can be seen today in the Spring Gardens, Spring Street, Cross Street area (Photograph 12). Preparations began about 1850 and building proceeded for half a century so that an interesting variety of styles can be seen. Some idea of progress can be obtained from the following directory figures:

<i>Road</i>	1856	1885
Spring Street	—	16
Spring Gardens	—	32
St. Thomas's Road	—	28
Cross Street	—	15
Henrietta Street	—	9

This area differed from previous urban expansion because it was not linear in form, along a main approach road, but was extremely compact and relatively near the centre of town and the railway station. It was also on much lower land than any previous settlement — in places less than twelve feet above sea level. Perhaps this is a reflection of improved drainage conditions, so that the inhabitants felt it was now safe to occupy these lower levels. The area, in fact, was the forerunner of many later private developments which helped to ease the congestion in the centre. It is marked as area 1 on Map 10. Unlike later estates, however, it was built over a long period without planning restraints, producing a diversity which gave it a character of its own.

From the beginning of the present century matters began to improve. By 1900 the railway system was at its peak and movement by rail was fast, convenient, and relatively cheap. The present day road network was virtually established and, following the turn of the century, motor vehicles began to make their appearance. Perhaps most important for the town, however, was the replacement of the Improvement Commissioners by Spalding Urban District Council.

The Commissioners had already bought the gasworks in 1862, and they were running successfully when the Urban District council took over. Various improvements were effected in gas supply early in the twentieth century, but an electricity service was not installed until 1927. In the same year a decision was made to rebuild the gasworks and work was started on the first stage of a sewerage scheme. The waterworks had also been purchased in 1900, and by 1939 Spalding was supplying quite a wide area stretching from Bourne to Boston Rural District. The sewerage scheme was completed by 1935 in the face of great problems caused by the presence of running silt.

The Council was also aware of the need for new houses and the first local authority scheme was implemented in 1913. Thirty houses were built along Queen's Road, near the junction with Holbeach Road, at a cost of just under £200 each. Most of the municipal housing, however, was built in the period between the two world wars and followed the pattern established in the St. Thomas's Road area in the previous century i.e. construction on lower land between main approach roads as near to the centre of the town as possible.



Private building in the inter-war period took place on the Hannam Estate in the 1930's (Area 4 on Map 10). This scheme was the idea of a Skegness builder and was characterised by the first large-scale use of mortgages in the area. Other work also took place along Halmergate, notably on the western section of the Cley Hall development, and in Neville Avenue and Halmer Gardens (Area 5 on Map 10), as well as along the western half of West Elloe Avenue (Area 6 on Map 10).

As a result of these developments population pressure on the centre of the town was eased considerably as most of the new houses were utilised by Spalding people, although there was some immigration from the surrounding rural area. This was most marked in the 1920's when there was a post-war population boom. During this period there was a 17.7% increase on population, of which 11.4% was by immigration. Many of these new arrivals probably took jobs in the developing bulb industry and also the sugar beet factory, which was established in 1926.

The general expansion is illustrated by the following occupation figures for Spalding from White's directories:

<i>Occupation</i>	<u>1922</u>	<u>193</u>
		7
Bulb growers	25	56
Grocers	17	27
Insurance agents	10	13
Hairdressers	8	11
Fruiterers	7	10
Motor engineers, garages	4	8

The most marked increase is in the number of bulb growers, which indicates the expansion of the industry in the inter-war period. It began towards the end of the nineteenth century, although initially the emphasis was on the production of flowers such as snowdrops and daffodils rather than on the bulbs themselves. Between the wars, however, the acreage under bulbs increased considerably, mainly because they needed more labour than other crops and gave a better return per acre for the smallholders.

The appearance of garages and motor engineers in the table is an indication of the growing importance of road transport to Spalding. At the beginning of the century motor vehicles were owned mainly by the rich, but most people *and* goods travelled by rail. With the introduction of mass produced cars and lorries in the 1920's and 30's the railways began to meet their first real competition. In 1928 the total daily tonnage of vehicles passing through Spalding was 6,900, but this had more than doubled in 1938 to 15,300. As a result the railways began to feel the pinch and slowly began to decline in relative importance during the 1930's.

Thus in less than a century Spalding had witnessed the greatest changes so far in its history. It had completely lost its function as a port; had seen the rapid rise and the beginnings of subsequent decline in the railways; and had experienced the biggest expansion of its urban area so far. The overcrowded settlement of 1850 had become larger, more spacious, much healthier and altogether pleasanter when the Second World War put an end to normal development.

## TOWN IN TRANSITION 1945-1977

Continued restrictions after the Second World War meant that there was little change in Spalding until the 1950's, although it soon became apparent that the local use of the railway was declining rapidly. In 1950 Spalding's long distance links were quite good; with Peterborough and London to the south; Nottingham, Leicester and the midlands to the west; Lincoln and Doncaster to the north; and King's Lynn, Cambridge and East Anglia generally to the east. The smaller local stations, however, were already little used.

### *Rail Passenger Services and Extent of Use — 1950*

	<i>Average number of weekday passengers</i>	<i>Passengers per train</i>
Spalding	230	5.1
Surfleet	16	1.5
Pinchbeck	4	1.0
Weston	6	0.5
Moulton	36	3.3
Holbeach	24	1.5
Fleet	7	0.6

The lack of use of local passenger facilities was due at this time to widespread use of the 'bus, which gave a more flexible service from Spalding to scattered rural communities in the surrounding area. In fact in 1950, 58 regular 'buses converged on Spalding, together with an additional 44 on market day and 69 on Saturday. Car ownership was still very limited and 'bus transport was probably at its peak at this time. As well as the large companies there were also many small operators who owned up to six vehicles. These concerns were engaged mainly in private hire, market day and Saturday journeys, holiday and leisure excursions, and the transport of schoolchildren.

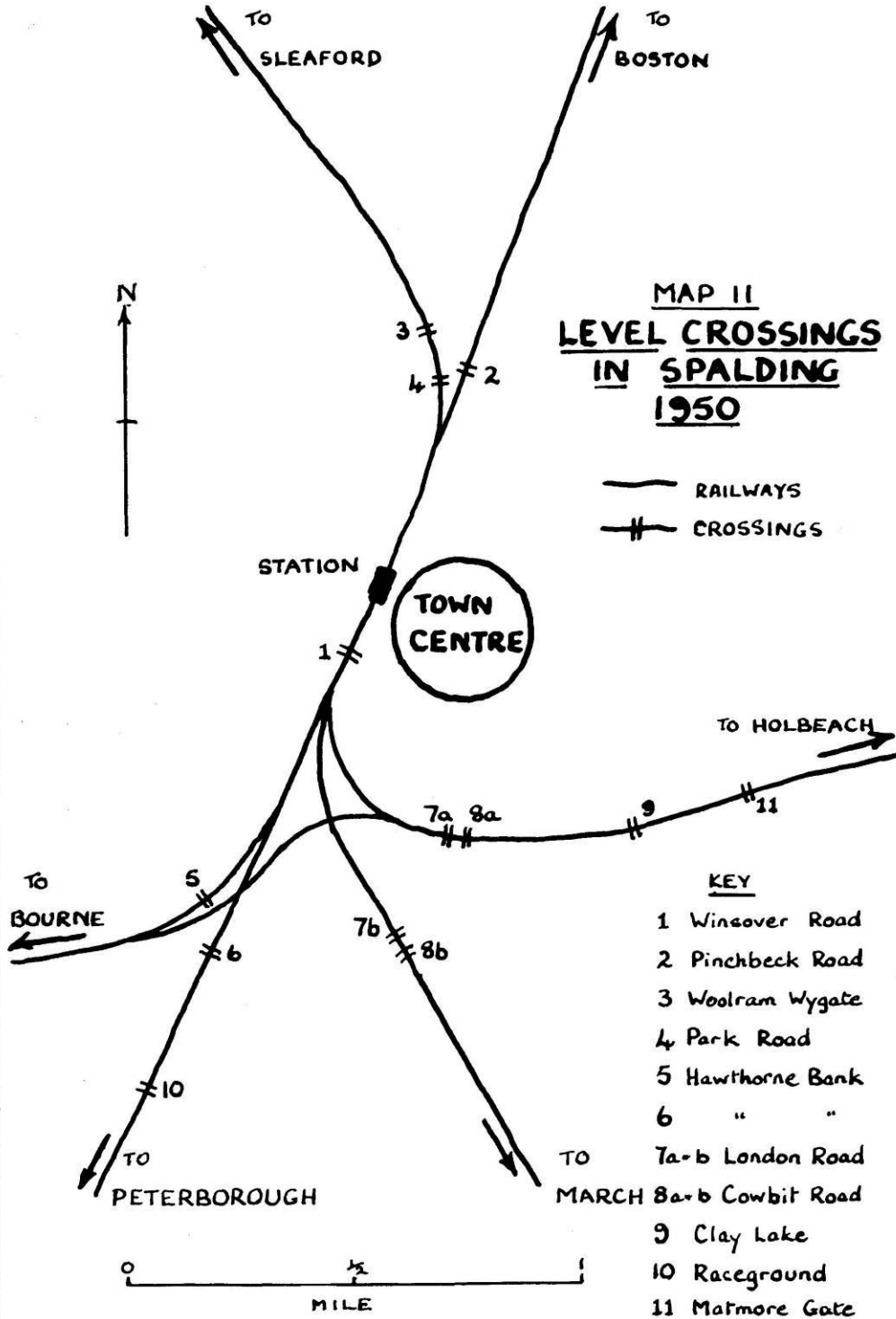
The clash between road and rail in Spalding was most evident at the level crossings and, as Map 11 shows, there were no less than thirteen of them within a mile and a quarter of the town centre. A survey undertaken about 1950 showed that at the Winsover Road crossing, which then carried two lines, the road was closed for an average time of no less than five hours each day. This represented a cost of £3,600 per year owing to time lost and wear and tear on vehicles. Other difficult crossings included the one on Pinchbeck Road (no.2 on Map 11), and those where the March line crossed London Road and Cowbit Road respectively (7b and 8b). To make matters worse some of the crossings were hand operated, for example 8b on Cowbit Road, and this was also closed to all road traffic at night. However, as lines were closed and rail traffic diminished the problem became less acute.

In spite of this problem, in 1950 Spalding was still quite a busy railway centre. Forty-five passenger trains, on average, stopped at the station on weekdays; twelve stopped at Littleworth and Deeping St. James on their way to Peterborough; eleven carried passengers on the line to Bourne via Counter Drain and Twenty; the same number ran to Sutton Bridge through Weston, Moulton, Whaplode and Holbeach; and four travelled through Spalding from Sleaford to March calling at Helpringham, Donington, Pinchbeck, Cowbit and Postland. This line, incidentally, was one of the busiest goods lines in eastern England.

It was becoming obvious, therefore, that the local services were not economic and closure of lines was inevitable. The first to go was the single track line from Bourne through Spalding to Sutton Bridge which was closed to passengers in 1959. Goods trains, however, continued to run from Spalding to Sutton Bridge until 1965. Little trace of this line now remains in Spalding although a short stretch of the former embankment, parallel with Balmoral Avenue, has been grassed over and the bridge still spans the Coronation Channel.

In 1970 the line between Boston and Peterborough was closed, but in June 1971, following a public outcry, the section between Spalding and Peterborough, still in use for goods trains, was reopened. Two trains initially ran each day, with the aid of a ratepayers' subsidy, in order to keep open this link, via Peterborough, with London, the midlands and the north. The only other line remaining runs from March to Doncaster via Spalding, Sleaford and Lincoln.

In its turn 'bus transport was stimulated for a short while by the rail closures, but today is facing the problems common to all rural 'bus services in the age of the internal combustion engine. An interesting innovation in Spalding is a local service which runs on two routes round the town fringes, catering for elderly people and non-car users



Spalding's main traffic problem today is posed by an ever-increasing flow of cars and goods vehicles through the town centre, on roads inherited from the turnpike era. Trunk road traffic passes through the main shopping centre, along Bridge Street, which is far too narrow for modern goods vehicles, and often across High Bridge, built in 1836 when conditions were entirely different.

Recent traffic counts in August 1975 and 1976 show that Pinchbeck Road is the busiest approach road, followed closely by West Elloe Avenue, New Road, The Sheep Market, the Market Place and Bridge Street. A particular problem is the ever increasing frequency of large articulated lorries which often have great difficulty in negotiating sharp bends. At the time of writing the situation is being further complicated by new sewerage works in the town centre, but the traffic diversions made necessary by this are being studied with an eye to the future.

A further problem produced by the increase in car ownership is that greater mobility has enabled people to travel further to do their shopping. As a result many potential Spalding shoppers now travel regularly to larger towns such as Peterborough and Nottingham where there is a greater range of choice. Shopping habits have also changed so that people buy greater quantities at less frequent intervals. The effect in Spalding has been to reduce local choice still further because of the closure of two department stores, namely Keightley's and Berrill's. Several grocers' shops have suffered the same fate, including old-established firms such as Field's and Hallam and Blackbourne. Thus in the last few years Spalding's importance as a shopping centre has declined, although a large supermarket is currently being built on the northern fringe of the town in an area originally set aside for industrial development.

Away from the town centre a considerable residential expansion has taken place along the fringes of the urban area in the last quarter of a century (see Map 12). The first post-war estates were built by the local authority and consisted of the St. Paul's Estate (Photograph 14), between Albert Street, Queen's Road, Commerical Road and Holbeach Road (Area 1 on map), and the eastern section of the Windsor Estate at Clay Lake (Area 2). Purpose built flats were also erected at Lansdowne Court, between Roman Bank and the Welland. Remaining development has been on a mixed local authority-private basis, or entirely privately except for residential areas for old people, built by the Council, off Stonegate, Alexandra Road, Bowditch Road and Queen's Road (Photograph 15).

The first local authority-private estate was begun in 1958, and formed the western part of the Windsor Estate (Area 3 on map). The land was bought by the Council, who then sold the plots to individual purchasers for house construction (Photograph 16). In the following years Grange Drive was built on the same basis, as was the Woolram Wygate Estate between Woolram Wygate and Park Road (Area 4 on map). More recently, however, private developers have bought land for speculative building, for example off Matmore Gate (Area 5), Low Road (Area 6), at Little London (Area 7), and West Elloe Avenue (Area 8). Various individual roads have been built privately where space has been available e.g. Exeter Drive and Avebury Gardens (Photograph 17), off Halmergate; Greenrigg Gardens and Oakley Drive off West Elloe Avenue; and Churchill Drive off Cowbit Road.

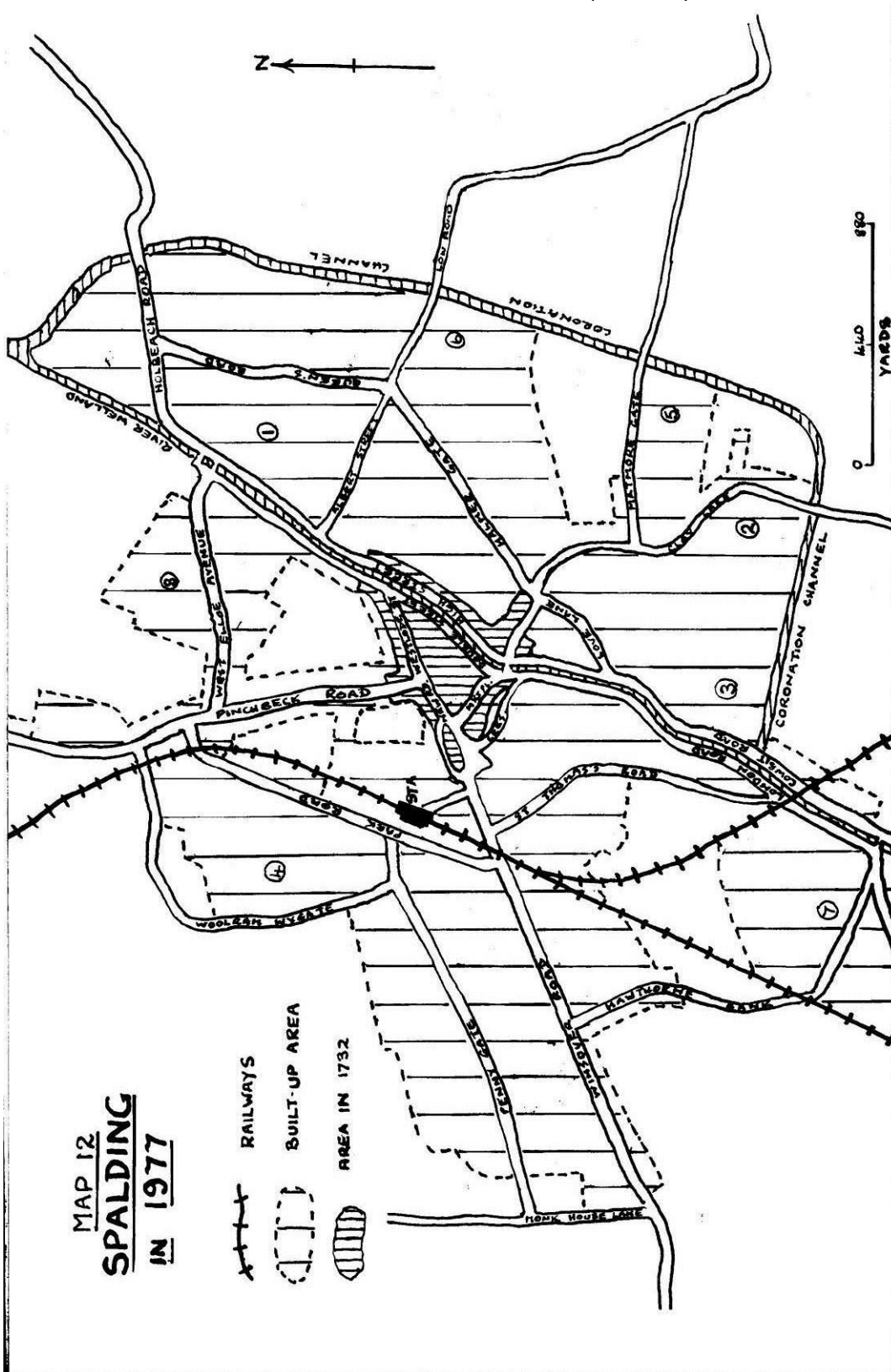
As can be seen from Map 12, the main post-war estates stretch in a curve around the central area, to the north, east and south. In the east the in-filling between the Welland and the Coronation Channel is almost complete so that the Channel itself forms a clear-cut break between urban and rural landscapes.

The earlier estates catered principally for local people or outsiders who came to work in Spalding itself, and did a great deal to alleviate previous urban congestion. The later estates, however, such as those off Low Road and West Elloe Avenue exhibit some entirely new features. A larger proportion of the new arrivals, for instance (about 50%), are not local. They come from many different parts of Britain and even from abroad. Some are transferred in to work for multi-national companies in the area; others are employees of companies abroad but require a family base in England; about 5% are retired; and 8% are in the services. In some cases the house in Spalding may be used as a holiday home and let for the remainder of the year. Of those who come to take up jobs, a very high proportion travel to work in Peterborough. But however diverse their origins, the reasons for coming to Spalding are broadly similar — well-built houses, moderate cost, and life in a pleasant town lacking the more serious problems common to the big cities.

In view of the extent of expansion since World War Two, the increase in population is not surprising.

*Population of Spalding*

Year	Total
1951	14,436
1961	14,824
1971	16,951
1977	18,000 (estimate)





The census figures show that the increase from 1951 to 1961 was slight at only 2.7%, and this confirms that the early post-war building catered mainly for Spalding people who moved into the new estates in the 1960's and early 1960's. Between 1961 and 1971, however, population growth was much more striking with an increase of 2,127 compared with only 388 in the previous decade. This represents a percentage increase of 14.3 over the ten years and the trend seems to be continuing during the seventies, although the rate of increase may be slowing down as land for development becomes more difficult to find. This is unusual, except in the new towns, and compares very favourably with Boston, for example, with a growth of only 4.5% between 1961 and 1971.

The population structure figures, however, show that in spite of the increase in the total, the age structure, in common with that of many towns, is changing.

*Percentage of Population of Spalding in Various Age Ranges*

<i>Age Range</i>	<i>1951</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1971</i>
0-4	8.0	7.4	8.0
5-14	14.1	14.9	14.5
15-44	42.2	39.4	32.0
45-64	23.3	25.3	30.8
65 and Over	12.4	13.0	14.7

During this period the proportion of young people under 15 has remained constant at about 22% of the total population. At the other end of the range, however, the percentage of older people has increased from 35.7 in 1951 to 45.5 in 1971. Such a change has wide ramifications, including an increase in the number of retired people, a decrease in the work force, and a reduction in the school population, and necessitates changes in priorities.

Changes, too, have occurred in Spalding's marketing functions. At the beginning of the century Spalding was still a general marketing centre for the produce of the surrounding area, but today fewer basic commodities change hands in the town. Livestock, however, are still sold in an area in the centre of the Spalding Bulb and Produce complex, mainly on Tuesdays, although the quantity has decreased. Local farmers have reduced their numbers owing to the uncertainty of the market. Most of the livestock, however, comes from within a 15 mile radius of Spalding, and includes pigs for slaughter, cattle, sheep and poultry. Store and breeding pigs are also sold on Fridays.

The biggest change on the marketing side has been brought about by the founding of the Bulb and Produce Auction. Its original purpose, when established in 1948, was the sale of local grown spring bulbs, but vegetables and cut flowers were soon added so that local producers could use their own outlet instead of selling at distant markets.

Today the Bulb and Produce Auction is not only the most important market in Spalding, but is far bigger than any similar market in Britain. Pot plants, vegetables, and most of the flowers are locally grown, within a radius of thirty miles of the town. On average, 75,000 boxes of flowers are handled each year. About two-thirds to three-quarters of the bulbs are produced locally and the remainder are imported from the Netherlands, the Channel Isles, Ireland and Scotland. Each year about fifty million tulip bulbs and five thousand tons of daffodil bulbs pass through the Auction which has ten thousand square feet of selling space, a fleet of lorries and the latest computerised accounting system. The buyers often travel in from towns well outside the Fens; from places such as Bristol, Leicester, Cambridge, Nottingham and various towns on the Lincolnshire coast. Strawberry buyers arrive from the north of England and even Scotland, and many bulb buyers come from London, South Wales and the Welsh Borders.

Spalding's industries have also developed considerably since the war, although there has been no basic change in their nature. They are principally concerned with the processing and packaging of agricultural and horticultural produce, and are located mainly in an area to the north of the town along West Marsh Road (Photograph 18). This area is dominated by three large concerns, all of which have interests outside the Spalding region. Products include a complete range of packaged fruit and vegetables, bulbs, perennial plants, shrubs, roses, house plants, and canned and frozen peas, beans and carrots. One of these firms has just initiated a major change to the production of frozen brussels sprouts and cauliflowers which should

lead to local farmers producing these vegetables in much larger quantities. The sugar factory processes about 200,000 tons of beet each season, and altogether these industries employ over 2,000 workers. A particular feature is the high proportion of women which accounts for 60% of the labour force in the largest concern.

The town today appears to be in the process of, or towards the end of, its period of most rapid change. In the last quarter of a century it has witnessed its greatest urban expansion; an increase of population out of keeping with the country as a whole; a relative decrease in the proportion of young people; and an influx of inhabitants who have few, if any, previous connections with the area. Its role is now much more complex than it was in quieter days. From being a relatively simple collecting and distributing centre, the town has been transformed in a century and a half into a residential area of some consequence, a specialised market centre, and an industrial area processing and packaging the products of the surrounding region. Nevertheless it still has an essential charm, inherited from those more tranquil early days, and it is to be hoped that this will be preserved for many years to come.

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H.E. Hallam

## MAPS

- These were all drawn by the author, using information from the following: Unpublished map of part of  
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