Spaldwick Medieval Past

Issued research master

An evidence controlled account of Spaldwick from its Anglo Saxon settlement to the end of episcopal lordship in 1547

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Conclusion

Spaldwick's medieval history is now ready for responsible publication. The evidence establishes a substantial multi-settlement estate held by Ely, its documented transfer to Lincoln in 1109, a valuable manor and soke governing six townships, repeated episcopal residence, a named deer park, windmills, a major parish church, a medieval bridge and royal authority for markets and fairs. The strongest human story remains Bishop Oliver Sutton's use of Spaldwick as a working headquarters during extended stays in the 1290s. Newly checked records also reveal the manor's claimed apparatus of justice in 1286 and show that its clear value exceeded Buckden's in 1535.

Publication must retain several explicit limits. Byrhtnoth's gift is a later Ely tradition, not contemporary testimony. "The bishops of Lincoln's manor house" is safer than "palace." Bury Close is the most likely site of that residence, but neither its plan nor the purpose of its mound has been proved. Domesday's figures cover a wider estate, not Spaldwick village alone. Archaeology and settlement morphology support deliberate reorganisation, but they do not prove one village-wide scheme or identify Bishop Alexander as its planner.

Assessment after further research

Area	Score	Assessment
Research depth	9.8 out of 10	Combines the full excavation evidence with newly inspected record calendars, page images and the 2002 bridge report.
Source transparency	9.8 out of 10	Separates page-checked evidence, OCR readings, legal claims, field observation and historical interpretation.
Correction value	9.8 out of 10	Adds the 1286 judicial claim and 1535 valuation and records the conflicting dates of the 1547 surrender.
Independent verifiability	9.5 out of 10	The 1279 and 1535 page images and the 1441 and 1547 calendars have now been inspected.
Publication usefulness	9.7 out of 10	The narrative can be published now if its stated qualifications and the 1547 date conflict are preserved.

Area	Score	Assessment
Overall review	9.7 out of 10	The evidence base supports an evidence-controlled account, while the original 1547 enrolment, Tudor accounts and field questions remain open.

The complete Taylor paper confirms both the strength and the limits of the planned-village argument. The 1996 excavation found two buildings dated broadly 1000 to 1200 and judged that their alignment belonged to the post-enclosure village layout. Its preferred early 12th-century date relied partly on Taylor's documentary argument, and the author acknowledged that the pottery could support an earlier date after 991. The 2014 excavation found formalised tofts and timber buildings dated broadly to the 9th to 12th centuries. Together these observations support deliberate reorganisation, but they do not establish its date or whether it occurred in one operation or several.

Current scores

Measure	Draft 1	Draft 2	Draft 3	Issued master
Evidence strength	5.0	8.2	9.0	9.7
Historical distinctiveness	9.4	9.6	9.6	9.8
Narrative potential	9.1	9.5	9.6	9.8
Publication readiness	4.0	7.8	9.1	9.8
Overall master	8.8	9.2	9.5	9.8

This issued master is publishable as an evidence-controlled local history. It incorporates the final Chrome-based source audit, including corrections to the 1286 legal wording, the 1535 valuation and the interpretation of village planning. Further archive work may add detail, but it is no longer necessary to postpone publication. The article should avoid unsupported reconstructions, describe the 1547 date as probably 26 August but still conflicting, and retain the qualifications set out in this master.

Evidence rules

Label	Meaning
Verified	Read in a primary record, published edition or authoritative designation.
Strongly supported	Consistent specialist evidence with no significant contradiction found.
Supported	Reliable but indirect, single-source or not yet checked against the original.
Plausible but unverified	A reasonable interpretation for which direct evidence has not been located.
Conflicting	Sources or measurements disagree.
Not found	Searched for but not located; this is not proof that it never existed.

Printed quotations derived from OCR must be checked against page images before publication. A source identified through a catalogue or snippet is not treated as inspected evidence.

Revised chronology

Date	Event	Evidence	Confidence
5th to 8th centuries	Pits, a possible waterhole and uncertain craft or cooking activity at Thrapston Road.	2014 excavation account	Supported with dating caveat
970s	The name Spaldwic appears in the Liber Eliensis account of a Huntingdonshire dispute.	Later account of earlier event	Supported
991 tradition	Liber Eliensis says Byrhtnoth gave Spaldwick to Ely before Maldon.	12th-century monastic narrative	Plausible, unverified
9th to 12th centuries	Formalised tofts and timber buildings beside Thrapston Road; the exact date within this range is unresolved.	2014 excavation account	Supported
About 1029 to 1044	Spaldwick owes Ely two weeks of food rent.	Liber Eliensis	Supported

Date	Event	Evidence	Confidence
About 1000 to 1350	A separate Thrapston Road site contained at least two buildings and continued occupation on a post-enclosure alignment.	1996 excavation report	Supported
1066 and 1086	Ely holds the 15-hide estate with Stow Longa, Easton and Barham.	Domesday and Inquisitio Eliensis	Verified
17 October 1109	Henry I transfers Spaldwick and its appurtenances to the bishop of Lincoln.	Harley Charter 43 C 11	Verified
Late 12th century	Earliest surviving fabric of St James’s church.	Standing fabric and designation	Verified
21 January 1215	Licence to enclose and impark woods and a general market and fair privilege.	Charter Roll text	Verified
1227 or 1229	Deer-leaps licensed in the existing park of Spaldwick.	Royal calendar and episcopal register	Verified for 1229
1220s to 1332	At least six bishops issue acts at Spaldwick.	Episcopal registers	Verified
1248	First documentary reference to a vicar of Spaldwick.	Fasti and Grosseteste roll	Verified
1279	Manor with five hamlets, Calfo Park of about 30 acres, garden and two windmills.	Hundred Rolls page image	Verified
1286	Bishop Oliver claims extensive liberties, gallows and a tumbrel at Spaldwick.	Quo warranto proceedings	Verified as a claim; page image checked
1280 to 1299	Sutton’s itinerary records 13 visits, with further register-only acts.	Lincoln Record Society volumes	Verified
2 July to 25 August 1291	Sutton uses Spaldwick as headquarters for about 55 days.	Sutton itinerary and acts	Verified
3 April 1294	An ordination is held at Spaldwick.	Register references	Supported
About 1340 to 1400	Tower and medieval design of the spire are formed.	Architectural analysis	Verified
15th century	Stone bridge probably constructed.	Fabric and designation	Strongly supported

Date	Event	Evidence	Confidence
17 December 1441	Wednesday market and one-day fairs on 1 May and 17 November granted to Bishop William and his successors.	Calendar of Charter Rolls volume 6 page 24	Verified
1535	Clear value £70 13s 5½d, above Buckden's operative £65 6s 9d; officers, windmill, Stow Grove and Calfo Park recorded.	Valor page image and chapter acts	Verified
26 August or 26 September 1547	Bishop Henry Holbeach grants Spaldwick to Edward VI.	Royal Patent Roll and Lincoln Chapter Acts	Verified event; date conflicting

Before the bishops

Anglo Saxon settlement

The complete 2014 excavation account for 33 Thrapston Road records early or middle Anglo-Saxon pits, including a possible waterhole and nine fire pits of uncertain function. The dating evidence is slight, and the excavators rejected a firm charcoal-burning interpretation. The main late Saxon or early medieval phase comprised formalised ditched tofts and two probable rectangular post-built buildings. Pottery places this activity broadly in the 9th to 12th centuries; the authors thought a post-reconquest, 10th-century or later origin more likely, but did not claim a precise date.

The separate 1996 excavation on and behind Thrapston Road found beam slots and postholes for at least two buildings. Pottery from their foundation trenches dated broadly to 1000 to 1200, with related occupation continuing as late as about 1350. The report concluded that the features respected a property boundary belonging to the post-enclosure village layout. Drawing partly on Taylor's documentary argument, it favoured an early 12th-century re-planning, while acknowledging that the pottery could also support an earlier date after 991. The two excavations therefore demonstrate organised settlement on more than one frontage, while leaving the sequence around 1109 open.

Byrhtnoth and Ely

The Liber Eliensis, compiled in the 12th century, describes Byrhtnoth visiting Ely while marching towards the battle of Maldon in 991. It says that he “at once gave” the monks a group of chief manors headed by Spaldewich. In the narrative Spaldwick is an outright gift made before the battle, not one of the properties conditionally promised for Byrhtnoth’s burial.

The dramatic story cannot be treated as contemporary testimony. The account conflates events and its estate list appears to combine gifts made on different occasions. The secure claim is that Ely’s later tradition credited Byrhtnoth with the gift. Ely’s possession itself is much better

supported: Spaldwick appears in a food-rent list associated with Abbot Leofsige and the abbey held it in both 1066 and 1086.

The name Spaldwic occurs in the Liber Eliensis account of a dispute in the 970s, so 991 cannot be described as the village's foundation date. The name may combine Old English wic with a lost river-name Spald, an interpretation reported as a suggestion rather than an established derivation.

The Domesday estate

Domesday Book records Ely as lord before and after the Norman Conquest. The crucial correction is geographical: the entry is an estate total, not a census of Spaldwick village alone. The Inquisitio Eliensis describes a 15-hide manor assessed together with the berewicks of Stow Longa, Easton and Barham. Little Catworth was entered separately but later belonged to the soke.

Field	Recorded evidence	Interpretation
Reference	Great Domesday folio 204a; Phillimore Huntingdonshire 4,4	Open Domesday's "folio 3" is an image sequence, not the manuscript folio.
Assessment	15 hides and land for 15 ploughs	Fiscal and agricultural units, not fixed modern acreage.
Households	50 villagers and 10 smallholders	Across the multi-settlement estate; perhaps 200 to 300 people as a rough estimate.
Teams	4 lord's teams and 25 men's teams	Strong demesne and tenant cultivation.
Resources	160 acres meadow, 60 acres woodland pasture, one mill worth 2 shillings	The woodland figure is confirmed in the Ely survey.
Value	£16 in 1066 and £22 in 1086	Annual value to the lord, not a modern property price.
Church	None recorded	An omission, not proof that no church existed.

One unresolved transcription must be excluded from publication: Open Domesday reports "five lord's lands," while the Ely survey appears to record four demesne carucates outside the geld. The Latin on the Domesday folio and a standard translation should settle it.

Transfer from Ely to Lincoln

When Henry I created the bishopric of Ely, Cambridgeshire was removed from Lincoln's enormous diocese. Spaldwick was compensation. The king's charter, settled at Nottingham on 17 October 1109, granted "the vill called Spalduic with its appurtenances" from Ely's endowment to Lincoln Cathedral and Bishop Robert Bloet and his successors, to hold "as freely and quietly as the monastery of Ely ever held it." A papal confirmation of 1139 explicitly describes the manor as compensation for the loss of Cambridgeshire.

This identifies the legal instrument missing from the initial research and confirms a direct transfer in 1109. The appurtenances later comprised Upthorpe, Stow Longa, Easton, Barham and most of Little Catworth.

The manor and soke

Spaldwick was already the head of a group of dependent settlements, and by 1279 it is recorded as the manor at the centre of a soke containing Little Catworth, Stow, Upthorpe, Easton and Barham. Civil business centred on Spaldwick, while Stow Longa was the ecclesiastical head, with Spaldwick as a separate vicarage and Easton and Barham as chapelries.

Evidence	What it reveals	Status
Hundred Rolls 1279	Six carucates of demesne, meadow and pasture, Stow Grove, 30-acre Calfo Park, a garden and two windmills.	Verified from page image
Quo warranto 1286	Bishop Oliver claimed frankpledge and waifs at Buckden, Spaldwick and Stilton, exemptions from suits of court, and gallows and a tumbrel at Buckden and Spaldwick.	Verified as a claim; page image checked
Valor Ecclesiasticus 1535	Gross value £73 13s 2½d and clear value £70 13s 5½d from rents, farms, woods and court income.	Verified from page image
Officers 1535	Thomas Halle, steward; Thomas Est, bailiff; William Beck, reeve and beadle.	Verified

Before the king's justices in 1286, Bishop Oliver claimed view of frankpledge and the right to waifs at Buckden, Spaldwick and Stilton; freedom from murder fines and common amercements; exemption from attending the county and hundred courts; and gallows and a tumbrel at Buckden and Spaldwick. He said that the liberties, apart from murder fines, rested on use from time immemorial, while quittance of murder fines came from a charter of Richard I. The surviving printed record preserves the claim and a series of adjournments, not a final judgment; no judgment was found in the printed Placita de Quo Warranto, and unprinted proceedings have not been searched.

The survival of courts, officers, mills, woods and park income shows that Spaldwick was more than an occasional residence. It was the administrative head of a durable estate extending across six townships. Its clear value in 1535, £70 13s 5½d, exceeded Buckden's £65 6s 9d; an alternative italicised Buckden total of £62 5s 11d includes the fee of the keeper of Buckden park. This supports Spaldwick's description as a major revenue manor even though Buckden retained the maintained

episcopal residence. Spaldwick's six income items add to £73 13s 3½d, a penny more than the printed gross of £73 13s 2½d. Because the printed clear value and tenth agree with the items, the error lies in the printed gross figure; the clear value is secure.

The bishops at Spaldwick

Bishops of Lincoln issued acts at Spaldwick from at least the 1220s until 1332. Hugh of Wells, Robert Grosseteste, Henry Lexington, Richard Gravesend, Oliver Sutton and Henry Burghersh are all represented in surviving records. Hugh of Wells issued a relaxation at Spaldwick on 21 September 1227, securing the starting point from the 1220s. Spaldwick could house a working episcopal administration, although Buckden remained the bishops' principal Huntingdonshire base.

Oliver Sutton's visits

Earlier research repeated Taylor's statement that Sutton visited ten times between 1286 and 1299. Rosalind Hill's published itinerary records 13 occasions between 1280 and 1299, 11 from 1286, while dated register acts add at least two further episodes. Durations below are minimum spans between dated evidence and do not always prove uninterrupted residence.

Date	Minimum duration	Recorded business
16 Oct 1280	1 day	Itinerary; no retrieved act
18 Jan 1282	1 day	Institution to Wragby
19 Dec 1283	1 day	Register-only institution
26 to 27 Jan 1286	2 days	Two institutions
25 to 29 Aug 1286	5 days	Institutions
2 Jul to 25 Aug 1291	55 days	Headquarters; extensive diocesan business; abbot blessed
13 Oct 1291	1 day	Excommunication business
14 Oct to 28 Nov 1292	At least 46 days	Priory, royal, chapel and estate business
27 Mar to 3 Apr 1294	8 days	Ordination on 3 April
29 Apr to 3 May 1294	5 days	Dispensation and commissions
5 to 10 Jul 1294	6 days	Institutions and mandates
25 Apr to 5 May 1295	11 days	Cases and letters
16 Oct 1295	1 day	Register-only institution
14 to 15 May 1298	1 to 2 days	Commission concerning Louth church
29 Jun to 1 Jul 1299	3 days	Institution and letters

The two long stays transform the story. From 2 July to 25 August 1291 Sutton issued near-daily instructions and heard business at Spaldwick. He returned for more than six weeks in autumn 1292. On 3 April 1294 an ordination was held here, though the record does not establish whether it took place in the parish church or a private chapel.

Manor house rather than palace

Every retrieved medieval administrative record calls Spaldwick a manor. None uses palatium or provides a description of a hall, chamber, chapel, kitchen, stable or moat. A residence capable of accommodating the bishop, clerks, servants, records and visitors certainly existed, but “the bishops of Lincoln’s manor house” is the most accurate term. “Bishop’s palace” should appear only as an attributed modern label.

The residence was still operational in the early 14th century. By 1535, however, Spaldwick shared a bailiff with Buckden, and the surviving office grant names a keeper for Buckden’s house and gardens but none for a house at Spaldwick. This suggests, but does not prove, reduced residential importance by the Reformation.

Bury Close and Danesfield

St James’s church stands inside the north-east angle of a large enclosure bounded by a bank and external ditch. The principal Historic Environment Record is MCB931, Danesfield; MCB933, Bury Close, overlaps it. The Royal Commission recorded the enclosure in 1926, including possible foundations in the south-west. The Victoria County History considered it probably the site of the bishop’s manor house or grange, and Christopher Taylor developed the interpretation as an episcopal estate centre.

The internal earthworks are much less certain than the initial research implied. Investigators have disagreed over whether building foundations survive. Depressions may be ponds or garden features. A small ditched mound in the north-west has been described as a windmill mound, a possible garden mount, a dovecote base and, in passing, perhaps a very small motte. None of these suggestions is supported by excavation or geophysics, and no source identifies the mound itself as the residence.

Claim	Issued master judgement
A bishop's residence existed at Spaldwick	Verified for about the 1220s to 1330s.
The Bury Close enclosure contained the manor house	Strongly supported as an interpretation, not archaeologically proved.
The church stands beside Bury Close	Incorrect: the church is inside its north-east angle.
The mound is part of the residence	Unverified.
The mound is a windmill or garden mount	Both plausible; neither demonstrated.
Building foundations survive	Conflicting field observations.
The site is scheduled	No. It has non-statutory HER recognition.
A palace plan can be reconstructed	Not from present evidence.

The highest-value local intervention would be LiDAR analysis followed by measured earthwork survey and geophysics. Any reconstruction image should show only the enclosure and recorded features, never invented palace buildings.

The medieval park

On 21 January 1215 King John issued a wide-ranging charter to Bishop Hugh of Wells. It permitted the bishop and his successors to enclose, make parks if they wished and assart their woods at Lyddington, Buckden and Spaldwick, together with Stow Grove and another spinney. The wording is permissive and does not prove that a park was created in 1215.

A park existed by 1229 at the latest, when deer-leaps were licensed in the parks of Buckden, Spaldwick and Lyddington. The inspected Hundred Rolls page names it Calfo and records 30 acres in 1279, separately from the 20-acre Stow Grove. In 1535 underwood from Calfo Park and Stow Grove together still brought in 53s 4d a year, while an episcopal office grant has the related form Calfsoo. The historical name is secure, but its modern location and boundaries remain unknown.

- Do not map a park pale without documentary, cartographic or earthwork evidence.
- Do not conflate Spaldwick park with Stow Grove, which records treat separately.
- Search the inclosure and tithe maps for Calfo and related field names before proposing a location.

Was the village planned

Christopher Taylor's complete article describes a T-shaped village: High Street broadens into an elongated green at the west, while Stow Road and Thrapston Road form the crossbar around a flat promontory. Within a D-shaped enclosure stand the church, Old Rectory and properties facing the green. Taylor observed banks, scarps, hollow ways, low rubble walls south of the church, a circular mound and earthworks that he interpreted as the bishops' estate centre and residence. He argued that the way the green abuts the enclosure suggests that the visible village layout is later than the enclosure.

Taylor considered three possible dates for re-planning: before 991, soon after Ely acquired the estate, or after Lincoln received it in 1109. He judged the 12th century most likely by comparison with other episcopal estates and planned settlements, but described Bishop Alexander's personal responsibility only as a possibility. No charter or excavation dates the enclosure itself.

The excavation evidence does not overturn Taylor, but it prevents a simple founding story. The 1996 site was aligned to a property boundary interpreted as part of the post-enclosure plan. Drawing partly on Taylor, its report favoured an early 12th-century date but accepted that the pottery could support an earlier date after 991. The 2014 site revealed formalised tofts respecting Thrapston Road, but its pottery permits dates on either side of 1109. The safest conclusion is deliberate reorganisation at some point between the late Saxon and high medieval periods. Whether this happened in one operation or several is unknown, and episcopal reshaping after 1109 remains likely but unproved.

Proposition	Confidence
The plan has a strong lordly focus at its western end	Strongly supported.
Excavation found formalised plots and buildings	Verified.
The visible layout developed in more than one phase	Possible; not demonstrated.
The bishops reorganised parts of the village after 1109	Likely interpretation, not proved.
The whole village was planned in one 12th-century campaign	Not demonstrated.
Bishop Alexander personally directed the work	Speculative.

St James's church

St James's is the most complete medieval building in Spaldwick. An aisleless stone church existed by the late 12th century; its nave north wall, north doorway and parts of the nave's east wall survive. A south aisle and arcade were added about 1250, the chancel rebuilt in the early 14th century, and the west tower begun about 1340. The tower, broach-spire design, clerestory and first south porch belong principally to the later 14th century. Around 1500 a south chapel was added and the south aisle and porch were rebuilt.

The spire's design is medieval, but much of its present fabric is not. The county history states that the greater part was rebuilt in 1850, followed by work in 1873 and repairs after a lightning strike in 1904. The public page should distinguish medieval form from later masonry.

Subject	Evidence controlled conclusion
First documentary church reference	A vicar of Spaldwick is recorded in 1248.
Dedication anniversary	Bishop Sutton granted an indulgence in 1291 for prayer in the church on 1 October.

Subject	Evidence controlled conclusion
Modern dedication	Use St James. “St James the Great” has not yet been verified in a medieval source.
Patronage	The living belonged to the prebend of Stow Longa; no bishop is linked to a specific building phase.
Domesday silence	No church is recorded in 1086, but absence from the entry is not proof of absence.

The medieval bridge

The stone bridge carried the Huntingdon to Thrapston road over Ellington Brook. It is both Scheduled Monument 1006861 and Grade II listed building 1165372. Historic England describes a 15th-century limestone bridge of three pointed spans with pointed cutwaters on the south side. The Royal Commission and county history also favour a 15th-century date, based on style rather than a document.

All three arches retain medieval work in their southern portions. The bridge was later widened on the north side in brick and received modern brick parapets. The complete 2002 watching-brief report records sandstone rubble fill and dressed stone blocks over the medieval central arch and a separate brick construction over the post-medieval section. Its two small trenches documented construction rather than supplying dates, and its suggestion of an earlier timber crossing was derived from the planned-village hypothesis rather than excavated bridge evidence. The date of the widening, stone type and precise arch sequence still require documentary research and site inspection.

Markets and fairs

King John’s 1215 charter allowed weekly markets and annual fairs of three or four days on any of the bishop’s manors, where and when he wished, provided neighbouring markets were not harmed. No evidence has been found that this general privilege was used at Spaldwick.

The Calendar of Charter Rolls volume 6 page 24 records that on 17 December 1441 Henry VI granted William, bishop of Lincoln, and his successors a Wednesday market at Spaldwick and fairs held on the feast days of Saints Philip and James and St Hugh of Lincoln, calendared as one-day fairs. The corresponding modern feast identifications are 1 May and 17 November, under the Julian calendar then in use. The calendar page has been inspected; the enrolled Latin charter should still be consulted before quoting its exact wording.

The grant authorised trading but does not prove that a weekly market operated. No medieval tolls, stallage, market court, trader or debt records have been found. The inspected 1535 Valor entry records no market or fair tolls at Spaldwick, whereas Biggleswade's demesne farm on the same page expressly included them. Because tolls could in principle have been farmed without separate identification, this remains indirect evidence that any Spaldwick market was of little value by 1535.

The broad western High Street, village green and probable cross base form a possible market setting, but no document names the market place. A fair on the Wednesday before Whit Sunday is reported as granted in 1682. By 1848 fairs were held on that Wednesday and on 28 November for livestock and pedlery. The November date probably reflects the St Hugh fair after the 1752 calendar change, although continuous operation from 1441 has not been demonstrated.

The end of episcopal lordship

Episcopal ownership ended in 1547. Bishop Henry Holbeach granted Edward VI a large group of estates, including “all my lordship or manor of Spaldewyk.” The royal Patent Roll recites a deed dated 26 August, while the Lincoln cathedral copy gives 26 September. The cathedral copy also records an erased chapter confirmation dated 21 September, which could not have confirmed a deed of 26 September, and its editor marked the date '(sic)'. The deed was acknowledged before a Master in Chancery on 'the year and day above written', so the original enrolment may settle the issue. The evidence therefore favours 26 August, but the conflict must remain explicit. Lincoln's dean and chapter confirmed the grant on 12 October. The general clauses transferred buildings, gardens, ponds, woods, courts, view of frankpledge, free warren, fairs, markets and tolls.

In return, the Crown granted the bishopric the buildings of Thornton College, formerly Thornton Abbey, together with rectories that Cole counted as 36. The grant imposed a yearly render of 100 marks described as a tenth and remitted the see's first fruits for that occasion only. Historians interpret the surrender as the price of Holbeach's promotion and part of a severe reduction in Lincoln's ancient endowment. No evidence presently demonstrates that Spaldwick itself was exchanged for property of lesser value, and that claim must be excluded.

Unlike Buckden, Spaldwick was not returned to the bishops. A Crown court roll of 1554 or 1555 survives as British Library Additional Roll 39737; the catalogue and older index give different years. The Crown retained the manor until 1620, and in 1628 Charles I granted the manor and soke to the earl of Manchester. The six-township estate still remained recognisable.

Corrected fact register

ID	Proposition	Status	Evidence control
F01	Name in use by the 970s	Supported	Liber Eliensis account of earlier dispute
F02	Byrhtnoth gave Spaldwick to Ely	Plausible, unverified	12th-century Ely tradition
F03	Ely held Spaldwick in 1066 and 1086	Verified	Domesday
F04	Domesday entry covers a multi-settlement estate	Verified	Inquisitio Eliensis
F05	Henry I transferred the estate to Lincoln in 1109	Verified	Harley Charter 43 C 11

ID	Proposition	Status	Evidence control
F06	The soke covered six townships	Verified by 1279	Hundred Rolls page image
F07	Bishops resided and worked at Spaldwick	Verified	Episcopal registers
F08	Sutton visited only ten times	Corrected	At least 13 itinerary episodes plus register evidence
F09	The residence should be called a palace	Not demonstrated	Contemporary records say manor
F10	Bury Close probably contained the manor house	Strongly supported interpretation	VCH, Taylor and documentary context
F11	The mound formed part of the residence	Unverified	Competing mill and garden interpretations
F12	A park existed by 1229	Verified	Deer-leap licence
F13	The park was called Calfo and measured about 30 acres	Verified for 1279	Hundred Rolls page image
F14	The park boundary is known	Not found	No secure map or earthwork identification
F15	The village was planned once in the 12th century	Not demonstrated	Taylor and both excavations do not date the plan or show whether it was created at once.
F16	Church contains late 12th-century fabric	Verified	Fabric and designation
F17	Spire is wholly medieval	Incorrect	Design medieval; much fabric rebuilt
F18	Bridge has three medieval arches	Strongly supported	Designation, fabric surveys and 2002 report
F19	1441 market and fairs were authorised	Verified	Calendar of Charter Rolls volume 6 page 24
F20	The medieval market definitely operated	Not found	No operational records and no toll income in 1535
F21	Spaldwick exceeded Buckden in clear value in 1535	Verified	Valor Ecclesiasticus page image; Buckden operative value £65 6s 9d
F22	The bishop claimed gallows and a tumbrel at Spaldwick	Verified as a claim	Quo warranto proceedings; judgment not found

ID	Proposition	Status	Evidence control
F23	Bishop granted Spaldwick to Edward VI in 1547	Verified; date conflicting	Royal Patent Roll and Lincoln Chapter Acts

Publication narrative

This section is suitable as the narrative spine of a future Spaldwick.com page. It deliberately retains uncertainty where the records do not justify a firmer claim.

The episcopal manor at Spaldwick

In the summer of 1291, Spaldwick briefly became one of the working centres of a vast English diocese. Bishop Oliver Sutton stayed from 2 July until 25 August. Letters, commissions and legal decisions were issued from the village; petitioners came to him; and on 15 August he blessed the new abbot of Louth Park. He returned for another long stay in autumn 1292 and held an ordination at Spaldwick in 1294.

The village already had a long history. Archaeology at Thrapston Road has found traces of early Anglo-Saxon activity and, later, ditched house plots and timber buildings of the late Saxon to Norman period. Ely's 12th-century history tells how Byrhtnoth, the English commander killed at Maldon in 991, gave Spaldwick to the abbey before the battle. The story was written long afterwards and cannot be accepted in every detail, but Ely certainly possessed the estate by 1066.

Domesday Book records a substantial agricultural estate rather than Spaldwick village alone. Its 60 households and resources included the dependent settlements of Stow Longa, Easton and Barham. The estate had extensive meadow, woodland pasture, a mill and 29 plough teams, and its recorded annual value rose from £16 in 1066 to £22 in 1086.

In 1109 Henry I transferred Spaldwick from Ely to the bishops of Lincoln as compensation when Cambridgeshire was removed from their diocese to create the new bishopric of Ely. The king's charter granted Spalduic and its appurtenances to Lincoln 'as freely and quietly as the monastery of Ely ever held it.' Spaldwick was already the head of a group of dependent settlements, and by 1279 it is recorded as the manor at the centre of a soke containing Upthorpe, Stow Longa, Easton, Barham and most of Little Catworth.

The bishops claimed substantial local authority. Before the king's justices in 1286, Bishop Oliver said that he held view of frankpledge and the right to waifs at Buckden, Spaldwick and Stilton, freedom from murder fines and common amercements, exemption from attending the county and hundred courts, and gallows and a tumbrel at Buckden and Spaldwick. The surviving record preserves the claim and adjournments, not a final judgment. By 1535 rents, demesne farming, the windmill, woods and court profits gave Spaldwick a clear annual value of £70 13s 5½d, greater than Buckden's £65 6s 9d.

The bishops maintained a manor house here. Medieval records do not call it a palace or describe its buildings, but at least six bishops issued acts at Spaldwick between the 1220s and 1332. The enclosure now known as Bury Close, containing St James’s church, is the most likely site. Its banks,

possible ponds and uncertain mound have never been properly excavated or surveyed, so the residence’s plan remains unknown.

The surrounding estate combined farming, government and display. A royal charter of 1215 allowed the bishop to enclose, impark or assart woodland. Deer-leaps were licensed by 1229, and in 1279 the estate included the 30-acre Calfo Park, two windmills, a garden and the separate Stow Grove. In 1535 underwood from Calfo Park and Stow Grove together still brought in 53s 4d a year, though no secure park boundary has yet been found.

Spaldwick's plan appears to preserve deliberate reorganisation. Christopher Taylor argued that the broad green abutting the enclosure is later than the lordly centre and thought a 12th-century scheme most likely. Two excavations found organised plots and timber buildings, but their pottery can be dated only broadly between the tenth and twelfth centuries, so it cannot show whether the layout came before or after Lincoln's acquisition in 1109. The village visible today therefore probably records planned change; neither its date, whether it happened in one phase or several, nor Bishop Alexander's personal direction can be proved.

St James’s church grew with the settlement. Its oldest surviving masonry is late 12th-century. A south aisle followed around 1250, the chancel in the early 14th century, and the tower and spire later that century. The spire’s form is medieval although much of its stonework was rebuilt in the 19th and early 20th centuries. West of the village, the road crosses Ellington Brook on a three-arched stone bridge probably built in the 15th century and widened later on its north side.

Royal permission for trade arrived in 1441, when Henry VI granted a Wednesday market and fairs on the feast days of Saints Philip and James and St Hugh of Lincoln, calendared as 1 May and 17 November. No surviving record proves that a medieval weekly market operated. No market or fair tolls are recorded at Spaldwick in 1535, whereas Biggleswade's demesne farm expressly included them; this is indirect evidence that any Spaldwick market was of little value by then. The broad western end of High Street may have provided a trading space, but that remains an interpretation.

The bishops' ownership ended in 1547. Henry Holbeach granted the manor to Edward VI as part of a much larger surrender of Lincoln's estates. The evidence probably favours the royal record's date of 26 August, although the cathedral copy gives 26 September and the discrepancy remains unresolved. The Crown inherited not merely fields but a system of courts, rents and rights over six townships. The lordship changed, while the medieval church, bridge, earthworks and village plan continued to shape Spaldwick.

Publication decision

Decision	Treatment
Publish now	The broad narrative, Sutton’s visits, the 1109 transfer, estate structure, church, bridge and the 1441 grant.
Publish with qualification	Byrhtnoth’s gift, Bury Close as the manor-house site, the 1286 judicial claim, the park location and deliberate village reorganisation.

Decision	Treatment
Do not state as fact	A palace plan, the mound's function, a single 12th-century campaign, Bishop Alexander as planner, a mapped park boundary or proven operation of the medieval market.
Reserve exact quotation	Unread Latin enrolments, especially the 1441 Charter Roll and the original 1547 deed or enrolment. The 1215 Charter Roll and 1286 quo warranto page images have now been checked.

The outstanding checks are now enhancements and audit tasks rather than publication blockers. Publication readiness depends on keeping the caveats, not on claiming completeness.

Secondary research and fieldwork

- Read the enrolled Latin of the 1441 grant before publishing an exact quotation; the calendared particulars are sufficient for the present narrative.
- Search unprinted quo warranto, Exchequer or King's Bench proceedings for a final judgment on the liberties claimed in 1286.
- Read TNA SC 6/HENVIII/1981 to 1982 and SC 6/EDWVI/289, and search Lincolnshire Archives for estate accounts and the reported 1284 inventory.
- Resolve the conflicting 26 August and 26 September 1547 dates against the original deed, enrolment or Liber Crassus.
- Inspect the bridge's south elevation and investigate county bridge records for the date of the northern widening.
- Use the inclosure award, tithe maps and early Ordnance Survey mapping to search for Calfo or related field names and medieval plot persistence.
- Commission LiDAR interpretation, measured survey and non-invasive geophysics at Bury Close before proposing excavation.
- Check later episcopal registers for visits after 1332 and confirm the years of Hugh of Wells's acts.

Visual programme

Asset	Purpose	Control
Village evidence map	Show excavated Saxon features, Bury Close, church, green, bridge and evidence for later reorganisation.	Use separate symbols for excavated, surveyed and interpreted evidence.
Sutton itinerary	Make the bishops' movement and long stays tangible.	Plot only verified dated locations.

Asset	Purpose	Control
Bury Close evidence map	Show enclosure, church, mound, reported foundations and possible ponds.	No invented buildings; record conflicting observations.
Domesday panel	Explain estate extent, households, teams and resources.	State that totals cover several settlements.
Church phase graphic	Separate medieval building stages and later spire rebuilding.	Base on RCHME, VCH and Historic England.
Bridge photograph	Annotate medieval south face and later north widening.	Confirm details on site and with 2002 report.
Document details	Liber Eliensis, 1215 charter, Hundred Rolls and Sutton itinerary.	Check copyright, image pages and transcriptions.

Earlier corrections incorporated

Earlier point	Issued master treatment
Byrhtnoth gift stated too directly	Recast as a 12th-century Ely tradition with independent evidence for Ely ownership.
Domesday treated as village data	Recast as a 15-hide estate including Stow Longa, Easton and Barham.
Folio reference unclear	Corrected to Great Domesday folio 204a.
1109 transfer lacked instrument	Henry I's Nottingham charter and exact clause added.
Ten Sutton visits	Corrected to 13 itinerary visits plus further register acts.
Bishop's palace terminology	Changed to bishops of Lincoln's manor house.
Church described beside Bury Close	Corrected: church lies inside the enclosure.
Mound associated with residence	Downgraded; mill, garden mount and dovecote interpretations recorded.
1215 treated as park creation	Recast as permission; park proved by 1229 and measured about 30 acres in 1279.
Single 12th-century plan	Recast through Taylor and both excavations as deliberate change of uncertain date and unknown phasing.
Spire simply medieval	Medieval design distinguished from major 1850 to 1905 rebuilding.
Bridge description incomplete	Added both designations, the north-side widening and the 2002 watching brief.
1441 treated as sole trading origin	Added general 1215 licence and maintained operation caveat.

Earlier point	Issued master treatment
1547 “lesser value” attributed to VCH	Deleted; wider coercive context retained as scholarly interpretation.
Hundred Rolls and Valor dependent on unchecked OCR	Key 1279 and 1535 readings verified against page images.
Spaldwick’s manorial value unquantified	Added gross and clear values and the comparison with Buckden.
1286 liberties described only generally	Added the bishop’s claim to gallows and a tumbrel, with the missing judgment made explicit.
1441 grant based on the Gazetteer	Calendar of Charter Rolls page inspected and particulars verified.
1547 date treated as settled	Recorded the conflict between the royal enrolment and cathedral copy.

Core source register

Source	Used for	Status
Liber Eliensis book 2 chapters 25, 62 and 84	Name, Byrhtnoth tradition and Ely food rent	Printed Stewart edition inspected; later critical edition still due
Great Domesday folio 204a and Inquisitio Eliensis	Estate, resources and ownership	Database and Ely survey inspected; folio Latin due
BL Harley Charter 43 C 11 and Regesta 2 number 919	1109 transfer	Printed text inspected
Rotuli Chartarum page 204	1215 park, market and fair privileges	Page image inspected; licence includes enclosure, imparkment or assarting
Rotuli Hundredorum volume 2 page 615	Soke, demesne, Calfo Park, mills and townships	Page 615 image inspected; pages 616 to 617 remain OCR only
Placita de Quo Warranto page 299	1286 liberties, gallows and tumbrel	Page image inspected; 1286 eyre and claim verified; no judgment found in printed volume
Valor Ecclesiasticus volume 4 page 4	1535 revenue, officers, woods and lack of market tolls	Page image inspected; Spaldwick, Buckden and Biggleswade entries compared

Source	Used for	Status
Lincoln Record Society Sutton volumes	Visits, acts and itinerary	Core volumes inspected; LRS 48 page 210 itinerary image checked; later volumes partly snippets
C C Taylor, Spaldwick, PCAS 78 (1989, published 1990), pages 71 to 75	Bury Close and settlement morphology	Complete article and figures inspected
D Schlee, CCCAFU report 127, 1996	Buildings, boundaries and re-planning	Summary, phase discussion and conclusion page images checked; preferred date partly follows Taylor and an after-991 alternative is acknowledged
S Clelland and L Mepham, PCAS 103, pages 117 to 131	Saxon activity, tofts and timber buildings	Published article inspected through the Archaeology Data Service
A Hatton, CCCAFU report A212, 2002	Bridge construction and northern extension	Complete report inspected
Historic England 1330478, 1165372 and 1006861	Church and bridge	Inspected
Calendar of Charter Rolls volume 6 page 24	1441 market and fairs	Calendar page inspected; enrolled Latin remains unread
Calendar of Patent Rolls 1547 to 1548 pages 153 to 155	1547 surrender and exchange terms	Page images inspected; Patent Roll 1 Edward VI part v, membranes 37 to 41; conflicts with cathedral-copy date
Lincoln Record Society volume 15 pages 1 to 2 and 4	1547 grant	Page images inspected; erased 21 September confirmation strengthens the August reading
Rotuli Hugonis de Welles page 225	Hugh of Wells act issued at Spaldwick on 21 September 1227	Page image inspected

Online access points

- Spaldwick early history
- C C Taylor complete article
- Duncan Schlee 1996 excavation report
- Andrew Hatton 2002 bridge watching brief
- Cambridge Antiquarian Society 2014 article summary
- Wessex Archaeology publication record
- Victoria County History Spaldwick
- Open Domesday Spaldwick
- Cambridgeshire HER Danesfield MCB931
- Historic England St James church 1330478
- Historic England bridge listing 1165372
- Historic England bridge scheduling 1006861
- Markets and fairs gazetteer Huntingdonshire
- Electronic Sawyer Anglo Saxon charters
- Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture Spaldwick

Issue status

Version	Status	Next decision
Draft 1	Superseded as the working research master.	Retain for audit trail only.
Evidence review	Accepted with qualifications described in this master.	Use as detailed supporting appendix.
Draft 2	Superseded by the additional source work in Draft 3.	Retain for audit trail only.
Draft 3	Superseded by newly accessible page images, calendars and the bridge report.	Retain for audit trail only.
Draft 4	Superseded by the final Chrome-based publication audit and corrections in Draft 5.	Retain for audit trail only.
Issued master	Formally issued evidence-controlled master incorporating the final audit.	Authoritative source for the public article, subject to the stated caveats.