ST JAMES' CHURCH

SPALDWICK

Research Master — Edition 2

RESEARCH EDITION Revised evidence-controlled account assembled as at 19 September 2026. Edition 2 incorporates the complete January 2020 third edition of Stuart Dixon's booklet while separating its attributed local research from independently inspected records. It contains no photographs; the booklet and Spaldwick.com hold important visual evidence.

Purpose

To preserve the evidence behind the history of St James' Church, support local historians and researchers, and provide a stable source from which later public interpretation can be developed.

Recommended citation

Mark Heath, St James' Church, Spaldwick: Research Master, Edition 2 (Spaldwick.com, 19 September 2026).

1. How to use this research master

This is an evidence-control document, not promotional copy and not a substitute for the original records. It consolidates the statutory list description, national and diocesan heritage records, published county histories, archaeological reports, episcopal records, historic bell research, Spaldwick Parish Plan, the Spaldwick village timeline, and a full-text search of the locally held Spaldwick News PDFs. Stuart Dixon's complete 36-page third edition of St James the Great, Spaldwick: A History and Guide (January 2020) has now been inspected. Its detailed local research, photographs and acknowledgements materially extend the evidence base, but it has no page-level citations and does not replace the underlying records. S. Inskip Ladds's history of Spaldwick has not yet been inspected.

Where an underlying source has not been seen, the document says so. AI systems assisted with discovery, comparison and review; they are not the authority. Researchers should cite the original record, publication or archive catalogue whenever possible.

Evidence status	Meaning
Verified	Supported by an inspected authoritative or direct source.
Strongly supported	High-quality evidence agrees, though an underlying original may still await inspection.
Supported	Relevant evidence exists but is secondary, incomplete or not decisive.
Plausible but unverified	Fits the evidence but lacks direct proof for the person, event or date.
Unverified / not found	No confirming evidence has yet been located.
Local account	Recorded in local research or Spaldwick News; provenance and independence may vary.
Inference	A reasoned interpretation, not an explicitly recorded fact.
Conflicting	Sources disagree; the conflict must remain visible.
Contradicted	Reliable evidence directly rejects the proposition.
Current	Time-sensitive and requiring a fresh check before reuse.

VERSION CONTROL Edition 2 supersedes Edition 1 of 3 September 2026 and was accepted by Mark Heath on 19 September 2026. The principal new source is Stuart Dixon's complete 36-page third edition, inspected on 19 September 2026 with the author's permission for website use. Edition 1 and the Edition 2 review draft remain preserved.

2. Executive evidence summary

- St James' is a Grade I listed medieval parish church, list entry 1330478, first listed on 28 January 1958. It stands in the Spaldwick Conservation Area at NGR TL 12758 72809.
- The earliest documentary reference presently identified dates from 10 September 1248. Bishop Robert Grosseteste's register addresses "J., vicar of the church of Spaldwick", proving that both the church and an incumbent vicar existed by that date.
- The same register's itinerary places Bishop Grosseteste himself at Spaldwick on 3 and 30 March 1251, showing that the village was already one of his stopping places.
- In 1441 Henry VI granted the Bishop of Lincoln a Wednesday market and two annual fairs at Spaldwick. The market and both fairs are separately recorded in the Calendar of Charter Rolls and the authoritative Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs.
- Archaeology at 33 Thrapston Road, immediately behind the church area, revealed a multi-period site: slight early-prehistoric activity, Iron Age trackway and enclosures, early/mid-Saxon activity, later Saxon tofts and medieval agriculture. The often-repeated date "1000 BC" is not presently supported by the published excavation account.

- The earliest surviving fabric is twelfth century. The church then grew in clearly distinguishable medieval phases: south arcade around 1250; chancel and chancel arch in the early fourteenth century; west tower in the mid-fourteenth century; spire by the end of that century; clerestory around 1370; and south chapel around 1500.
- The dominant landmark is the four-stage west tower and octagonal stone spire. VCH records its height from ground to summit as 152 feet (approximately 46 metres). Historic England describes its figures, three tiers of spire lights and the carved name "J. Rivitt 1873" on the uppermost light.
- The church retains nationally significant early fabric and fittings: the twelfth-century beakhead north doorway, thirteenth-century south arcade and font, fourteenth-century arches and coffin lids, and an early-sixteenth-century oak screen and chapel roof boss.
- The present ring comprises six bells. Owen recorded five bells in 1899, all a "fine ring" by Watts of Leicester and dated 1635 in his detailed entry; a sixth/treble was added and one older bell recast by Alfred Bowell in 1921. The Church Heritage Record confirms six bells today.
- Documented restoration campaigns occurred in 1810, 1815, 1843, 1850, 1863, 1873, 1905, 1908 and 1914. The spire was struck by lightning on 30 May 1904 and repaired and partly rebuilt.
- Recent history is unusually well documented in Spaldwick News: lead thefts in 2007 and 2011, fundraising and a £27,000 stainless-steel reroofing completed in 2014, concern about long-term viability in 2016, and the later Common Ground initiative to extend community use.
- Important gaps remain: the church's possible pre-twelfth-century predecessor, advowson and institutional history in full, the exact archive record behind each restoration, the 1953 storm damage, and primary verification for many detailed claims in Stuart Dixon's booklet. The complete booklet supplies names, dates, costs and likely source routes for the organ, clock, furnishings, monuments, charities and restoration campaigns, but it does not by itself establish those details as verified facts.

3. Scope, identity and significance

The subject is the Anglican parish church legally recorded as "Spaldwick: St James", Church of England church code 614185, in the Diocese of Ely and Archdeaconry of Huntingdon and Wisbech. Historic England's statutory entry names it the Parish Church of St James. The Church Heritage Record records a footprint of 334 square metres and identifies the building as medieval.

Grade I status reflects exceptional architectural or historic interest. The statutory description is the controlling source for the building's fabric sequence. Its list entry was amended in 1983, and therefore incorporates scholarship and inspection later than the original 1958 designation.

SCOPE BOUNDARY This master covers the building, fittings, bells, major repair campaigns, churchyard evidence where directly relevant, and the church's continuing place in village life. It does not attempt a complete history of every incumbent, burial, monument, service or parish organisation. Those can become linked research projects.

Stuart Dixon's complete history and guide

The complete third edition of Stuart Dixon, St James the Great, Spaldwick: A History and Guide, is a 36-page illustrated local booklet dated January 2020. Dixon records an original edition of February 2012, additions and amendments in July 2015, and further photographs and revised text in this third edition. The author supplied the PDF and permitted its use on the website. The booklet was inspected in full on 19 September 2026.

The booklet is now an inspected source rather than a fragment. It combines architectural description, extracts said to come from parish registers and accounts, local recollection, photographs, monument inscriptions, an incumbent list and explanations for visitors. Its acknowledgements identify RCHME, VCH, Pevsner, the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture, British History Online and other works, as well as the Revd Canon Jonathan Young, Rosemary Good, John Blatch, Edie Adams, Irene Davis and a local history group. Because individual statements are not tied to particular sources, detailed claims remain attributed to Dixon until the underlying record is inspected.

CONTROLLED USE The complete booklet has now been inspected. It is a substantial local secondary source and a route to parish evidence, not a substitute for that evidence. The 1248 church reference and 1441 market-and-fairs grant are independently confirmed; Taylor strongly supports Bury Close. The excavation does not support Dixon's precise "1000 BC" wording. Costs, register extracts, oral recollections and technical claims about the organ and clock remain attributed until their underlying records are checked.

The complete text confirms that Dixon was the immediate source for several details already circulating locally: the "about 1000 BC" formulation, the possible Black Death interruption, exact restoration costs, the organ and clock accounts, and the 1953 storm date. Recovering the complete booklet improves provenance but does not turn those claims into independent corroboration. Where Dixon and an authoritative inspected source disagree, the conflict is retained.

Booklet coverage and controlled use

Pages	Subject	Research value	Initial treatment
3–10	Prefaces, settlement, episcopal estate and building history	Edition history and a connected local account; several claims can be compared with archaeology, VCH and episcopal records.	Attribute Dixon; retain corrections already established in Edition 1.
11–17	Chancel, chapel, nave, aisle, tower and bells	Detailed observations, photographs, inscriptions and accounts of lost or altered fittings.	Use as inspected local publication; verify specialist dates and events separately.
18–25	Clock, monuments, plate, clergy, churchyard, charities, registers and restoration	Materially broadens the subject beyond the fabric chronology and identifies likely parish-record evidence.	Add to the master with page references; do not describe as primary evidence.

Pages	Subject	Research value	Initial treatment
26–31	Ecclesiastical terms, incumbents, icon and local reflection	Full incumbent list, icon provenance and named local testimony.	Preserve attribution; check against diocesan and parish records before public factual use.
32–36	Acknowledgements and photographs	Identifies source families and provides visual evidence of the building and furnishings.	Catalogue images and clarify any third-party reproduction rights before separate reuse.

Archaeology and the settlement beside the church

Excavation in 2010 at 33 Thrapston Road (NGR 512780 272917), on land backing onto the area behind St James' Church, established a much richer and more carefully phased sequence than the simplified local wording suggests. Clelland and Mepham record slight early-prehistoric traces, followed in the Iron Age by a trackway, boundary ditches and small enclosures associated with mixed farming. The site appears to have been abandoned in the Romano-British period, then reused during the early/mid-Saxon period and reorganised in the late Saxon period into tofts containing rectangular post-built structures. In the medieval period it formed part of an agricultural field system.

This is strong evidence for long-lived settlement immediately around the western side of the village. It does not establish a church in the prehistoric or Saxon periods, nor does the published account currently justify assigning the earliest pits and ditches specifically to about 1000 BC. The archaeology should therefore be described by period and feature rather than compressed into a single date.

Bury Close and the bishops of Lincoln

C. C. Taylor's specialist analysis identifies the ditched enclosure, building foundations, closes and possible ponds at the west end of the village as the medieval palace and estate centre of the bishops of Lincoln. Earlier Royal Commission investigators also saw stone foundations there in 1926. Taylor states that there can be little doubt about the combined interpretation of enclosure, earthworks and parish church, while the exact plan and use of individual buildings remain unresolved.

Documentary context reinforces the physical evidence. Bishop Oliver Sutton stayed at Spaldwick ten times between 1286 and 1299, for visits lasting from a single day to nearly eight weeks. This proves repeated high-level episcopal use of Spaldwick, although the records do not by themselves identify the precise building in which he lodged. Taken together, the documentary and archaeological evidence make the Bury Close identification strongly supported rather than merely a local tradition.

4. The building through time

Origins and twelfth-century fabric

No inspected source currently proves a church on this site before the twelfth century. The earliest surviving fabric identified by Historic England lies in the nave walls, north doorway and part of the east wall. The north doorway is particularly important: a twelfth-century round arch with two moulded orders, the outer decorated with beakhead ornament. Claims of a Saxon church or a foundation date earlier than the surviving building should therefore remain unmade until archaeological or documentary evidence is found.

The earliest documentary reference so far identified is in Bishop Robert Grosseteste's register. An instrument dated at Buckden on 10 September 1248 is addressed to "J., vicar of the church of Spaldwick" and commands him to induct Robert de Maperton to the vicarage of Leighton Bromswold. The Spaldwick vicar is acting as the bishop's local officer rather than being appointed by this instrument, but the wording directly proves an established church and vicarage at Spaldwick by 1248. The correct printed reference is F. N. Davis (ed.), Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste, p. 296; the previously circulated page number 246 is erroneous.

Grosseteste's itinerary in the same published register records him at Spaldwick on 3 March and again on 30 March 1251. The entries do not state where he stayed or what business he conducted, but they provide additional direct evidence that Spaldwick formed part of the bishop's active itinerary well before the better-documented visits of Oliver Sutton later in the century.

The 1441 market and fairs

On 17 December 1441 Henry VI granted William, Bishop of Lincoln, a Wednesday market at Spaldwick and two annual fairs: one on the feast of Saints Philip and James (1 May) and one on the feast of St Hugh of Lincoln (17 November). All three elements are separately recorded in the Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1427–1516, p. 24, and in Samantha Letters's Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs. Accounts describing this as a grant of fairs only are incomplete.

Thirteenth-century enlargement

Around 1250 a south aisle was added or remodelled. Its three-bay arcade has two-centred arches of two chamfered orders carried on octagonal piers with moulded capitals and bases. The octagonal font is also assigned to the thirteenth century. Together these features show a substantial enlargement of the earlier nave.

Fourteenth-century rebuilding and the landmark spire

The chancel and chancel arch date from the early fourteenth century. Historic England describes two-centred arches and windows with intersecting tracery and labels. The west tower followed in the middle of the century. It is of four stages, with a moulded plinth, embattled parapet, a distinctive lozenge-shaped west window and two-light belfry openings.

The octagonal ashlar spire was completed by the end of the fourteenth century. It carries figures at the angles and three tiers of spire lights. The clerestory was inserted around 1370. The suggestion that building paused because of the Black Death of 1349 is an attractive interpretation of a masonry break, but is not stated by Historic England and remains an inference.

Around 1500 and the early modern church

A south chapel was added around 1500 and the south aisle and porch were rebuilt. The chapel has an early-sixteenth-century roof with a central boss; the oak screen is also early sixteenth century, though its present arrangement may incorporate alteration or reused work. Two early-fourteenth-century coffin lids survive in the church. In the seventeenth century two buttresses were added to the north nave wall, the window between them was altered, and nave parapets were rebuilt.

Dixon's page 15 adds useful detail to the screen's history. It describes five bays of simple open tracery, an opening, and an upper beam carved with vine and foliage beneath a damaged crest of foliage and crowns. It says the screen has been much patched and may contain parts of two screens. A screen across the chancel arch was recorded in 1851; although no chapel screen was then mentioned, Dixon says evidence indicates that one had been removed. These observations need comparison with the 1851 source and a specialist fabric inspection.

5. Architectural components and fittings

Feature	Date	Description	Status
Nave walls and north door	Twelfth century	North doorway with beakhead ornament; among the earliest surviving fabric.	Verified
South arcade	c.1250	Three bays; octagonal piers, moulded capitals and bases.	Verified
Font	Thirteenth century	Octagonal stone font.	Verified
Chancel and chancel arch	Early fourteenth century	Two-centred arches; intersecting tracery.	Verified
West tower	Mid-fourteenth century	Four stages; lozenge west window; two-light belfry openings.	Verified
Spire	Late fourteenth century	Octagonal ashlar spire; figures and three tiers of lights.	Verified
Clerestory	c.1370	Added above nave arcades.	Verified
South chapel	c.1500	Early-sixteenth-century roof and central boss.	Verified
Oak screen	Early sixteenth century	Survival and date are established; precise assembly history merits specialist study.	Verified
Piscina	Medieval	Recorded among the fittings.	Verified
Coffin lids	Early fourteenth century	Two surviving lids.	Verified
Stained glass	Medieval fragments and later glazing	Arms in north clerestory and two medieval fragments locally reported; much glazing Victorian.	Supported
Funeral bier	Historic, date not established here	Restored by Wally Smith and reported in 2012.	Local account

Feature	Date	Description	Status
Communion cup and cover-paten	1628	Silver-gilt pair, reportedly hallmarked and inscribed as Lady Magdalin Hide's gift.	Local account; inspect plate record
Organ	1916	Attributed to Mr Hewett of Leicester; installed in October and dedicated 2 November.	Local account; verify faculty and maker
Clock mechanism	Parts possibly medieval; altered later	Dixon describes possible c.15th-century components and c.1700 modifications.	Local account; specialist assessment required
Icon of the Virgin and Child	Date not established	Meteora provenance and gift by the Revd John Hare reported by Dixon.	Local account
Incised and scratch dials	Date not established	Vertical sundial and possible scratch dials reported on south buttresses.	Inspected local publication; survey required
Lost chest and furniture	17th-century chest; reportedly stolen in 1970s	Booklet records loss of two furnishings.	Local account; seek faculty/insurance record

The building is constructed chiefly of stone and pebble rubble. The tower uses coursed rubble, the spire is ashlar, and the dressings include Barnack, Weldon and Ketton limestone. Roof coverings include slate and lead, although the stolen south-side lead was replaced in 2014 with Terne-coated stainless steel. These materials should be described by phase rather than implying that every roof retains its historic covering.

Furnishings, plate and altered interiors

Dixon records a sequence of furnishings that has not previously been brought together. He says the remaining metalwork on the chancel steps came from a festival decoration at St Hilda's, South Shields, was acquired by the Revd George Sharland in 1876 to support a large cross, and was probably reduced during the 1914 work. He also says the present pulpit was installed by the Revd Eric Forster, replacing a stone pulpit from St Mary Aldermanbury bought by the Revd Havard-Jones for £25, with £32 transport; Rosemary Good's recollection was that Forster demolished it and reused the rubble locally. These are valuable attributed accounts of change, but the acquisition, removal and costs need documentary confirmation.

The booklet identifies a silver-gilt communion cup and cover-paten, both hallmarked 1628 and inscribed as the gift of Lady Magdalin Hide to Spaldwick church. It records the thirteenth-century font as releaded in 1865, a seventeenth-century chest and another item of furniture as stolen in the 1970s, and a stone cross placed on the chancel roof on 13 December 1918 at a total cost of £1 17s. Each is a useful lead for plate registers, faculties, insurance records and churchwardens' accounts.

Dixon says the icon of the Virgin and Child was painted at Meteora and given by the Revd John Hare, a curate and former gynaecologist with an interest in Greek Orthodoxy. His interpretation identifies the image as an Eleousa, or "Loving Kindness", type. The gift and provenance should remain attributed to Dixon until parish or donor records are found; the icon itself should be photographed and catalogued.

6. Restoration, damage and repair

Nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Historic England and the published county surveys record work in 1810 and 1815, reroofing of the nave in 1843, rebuilding of much of the spire in 1850, restoration of the whole church in 1863, and restoration of the upper spire in 1873. The 1863 campaign renewed the south aisle roof, reglazed nearly all windows and opened the tower arch. The Church Heritage Record directly identifies Incorporated Church Building Society file 05961 and a 1863 ground plan by architect Robert William Edis. The catalogue attribution is verified; the plan and correspondence themselves remain to be inspected.

Dixon, pp. 15 and 24–25, dates the nave reroofing to 1843–46, names Mr Habersham as architect and gives a cost of £218 13s 0½d, offset by £5 6s 6d from old wood and £32 10s from old lead. He describes the 1862–64 restoration under Robert William Edis in unusually useful detail: south-aisle roof, open seating, chancel stalls, altar, pulpit, desk, belfry screen, floors, windows, tracery, stonework and coke-fired warming apparatus, with a reported total of £415 9s 8d. The figures and scope are plausible routes into the churchwardens' accounts and ICBS file 05961, but remain attributed until those records are inspected.

VCH records that the spire was struck by lightning on 30 May 1904 and was subsequently repaired and partly rebuilt; Historic England dates a spire restoration to 1905. This is strong published evidence, though a contemporary newspaper or parish record has not yet been inspected. The chancel was restored in 1908 and the tower in 1914. RCHME directly transcribed the carved name "J. Rivitt 1873" on the upper spire light, but the identity and role of Rivitt have not yet been established.

Later twentieth century

Dixon, p. 13, attributes the organ to "Mr Hewett of Leicester", gives its cost as £85, dates installation to October 1916 and says the Archdeacon of Huntingdon dedicated it on 2 November 1916; he also recalls its original hand pumping and later electrification. Dixon, p. 18, describes the clock mechanism as unusual, with parts possibly dating from about the fifteenth century and modifications around 1700, and attributes later renovation to Rob Rushbrook of Lola Cars. The village timeline dates Rushbrook's restoration to October 1986. These richer accounts narrow the research questions but require the faculty, maker's records, invoices or PCC papers before the maker, costs and early mechanism can be stated as verified. The timeline and Spaldwick News also report a 1992 bell rehanging and £50,000 spire-strengthening campaign. Dixon and Spaldwick News give 25 May 1953 for later storm damage to the spire; no independent contemporary source has yet been inspected.

Twenty-first-century fabric campaigns

Spaldwick News records tower and roof repairs in 2002 that consumed a £20,000 fabric fund. Lead theft in 2007 was followed by a replacement costing about £15,000, tighter insurance conditions, movement detection, SmartWater marking and efforts to prevent vehicle access close to the building. A further theft in 2011 began a longer campaign to reroof the affected area.

By 2012 the new roof was estimated at £24,000. Funding was assembled from insurance, village fundraising, grants and an interest-free loan. Reports record £12,000 from Amey CESPA and a £3,000 Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust loan; later accounts show £16,350 in Landfill Tax Credit, £3,000 from the trust, £5,000 insurance and about £3,400 local fundraising. These figures appear to represent different stages or accounting categories and should not be forced into a single total without the project accounts. The stainless-steel roof was completed in 2014 at a final reported cost of approximately £27,000–£27,762. Bat surveys and the presence of pipistrelle and long-eared bats affected the timetable.

7. The bells

The current tower contains a ring of six. The Church Heritage Record confirms six bells. In 1899 the Reverend T. M. N. Owen documented five and called them a fine ring by Watts of Leicester. His detailed Spaldwick entry dates the five to 1635, although a separate summary passage in the same digitised book appears to print 1638; the bell-by-bell entry and surviving inscriptions favour 1635. This internal discrepancy should be noted rather than silently erased.

In 1921 Alfred Bowell of Ipswich added a new treble, recast one of the Watts bells and rehung the ring. The new bell records the vicar H. T. Havard-Jones and churchwardens E. F. Brown and F. E. Last. Bowell's foundry records also contain a Spaldwick entry dated 24 June 1922 for chiming apparatus costing £20, showing that related work continued or was accounted for after the 1921 rehanging.

Bell	Date	Founder	Evidence / inscription
1 — treble	1921	Alfred Bowell, Ipswich	New bell. Names H. T. Havard-Jones, E. F. Brown and F. E. Last; "made me & hung us all".

Bell	Date	Founder	Evidence / inscription
2	1921 recast; predecessor 1635	Alfred Bowell; predecessor Hugh II Watts	The former treble was recast and became the present second bell; the 1635 predecessor does not survive unchanged.
3	1635	Hugh II Watts, Leicester	Names churchwardens Robert Filbrigge and Richard Edwardes.
4	1635	Hugh II Watts, Leicester	Latin: a call to come to prayers.
5	1635	Hugh II Watts, Leicester	Latin invocation to Jesus of Nazareth.
6 — tenor	1635	Hugh II Watts, Leicester	Inscription and exact wording to verify from Owen/original bell record.

Dixon, pp. 17–18, adds a longer maintenance narrative: four bells and a Sanctus bell in 1552; work on the great bell and a new wheel in 1761; tenor rehanging in 1866; work to the bells and frame in 1869 and 1871; a £400 repair bill after the 1904 lightning strike against a £310 insurance payment; and silence until the 1921 reconstruction. These precise claims should be tested against inventories, accounts, faculties and insurance papers. The booklet's wording that the "five old bells" are by Hugh Watts must not obscure the verified fact that the former treble was recast by Bowell in 1921.

Owen recorded local ringing customs in the late nineteenth century: for a man, three single strokes on each bell from treble to tenor; for a woman, the order reversed. Such customs are valuable social evidence but should be presented as practices recorded in 1899, not assumed to continue today. A first peal on the tower bells is recorded on 3 May 2002: 5,040 Spaldwick Treble Bob Minor. The village timeline records later commemorative ringing for the Platinum Jubilee and the death of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022.

BELL RESEARCH PRIORITY Inspect Owen's original pages at high resolution, the Bowell job records, the 1921 faculty and invoices, and the 1992 rehanging papers. Record for each bell its founder, date, diameter, weight, note, inscription, recasting history and present hanging.

8. Worship, community and renewal

The church has never been only an architectural object. The 2008 Parish Plan survey found it important to residents for many reasons and identified concerts as the most commonly suggested wider use. Action 21 proposed increasing use for concerts and meetings. This provides an evidence-based bridge between historic fabric and the present Common Ground vision.

In 2016 Spaldwick News reported discussion about the church's future amid an ageing congregation, attendance sometimes below ten and annual running costs of about £8,000. Closure rumours were denied. The Church Improvement Fund sought kitchen and toilet facilities and wider community use. By 2017 this was described as the Church Development Fund.

Common Ground emerged publicly in late 2022 as a community-led initiative to modernise St James and create a multi-use space while respecting its continuing church function and historic importance. Reports during 2023–24 record consultation, events, architectural work and charitable status. Because plans and organisational arrangements can change, definitive statements about the present scheme should be checked against Common Ground's current records before each edition.

The Church Heritage Record confirms that the church is open for worship and is not on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. Its online record is explicitly incomplete, so blank fields and "unknown" entries must not be treated as evidence of absence.

9. Churchyard, ecology and memorial evidence

The Church Heritage Record places St James within the Spaldwick Conservation Area and records no scheduled monument or additional listed structure within its curtilage. It lists 63 species recorded nearby—62 plants and one mammal—and a blurred bat record dating from 2013. The database warns that records are incomplete and that non-recording does not demonstrate absence. This accords with Spaldwick News reports that bat surveys influenced the 2013–14 roofing programme.

An internal framed Roll of Honour records 38 names from Spaldwick and Barham, seven marked as deaths. War Memorials Online reported fading and insect damage in 2013. The external village war memorial has its own history and should be linked rather than duplicated in a church narrative. A complete monument-and-inscription survey, including ledger stones, coffin lids and churchyard memorials, remains a separate research task.

Monuments, clergy, charities and parish records

Dixon, pp. 19–20, transcribes monuments and memorial windows in the south chapel, nave and south aisle. The names include members of the Thompson, Dennis, Sharman, Newton, Heading, Jellis, Cooper and Hulbert families, the Revd Richard Andrew, surgeon James Mann and William Harold Ashton. Particularly useful are the Hulbert memorial details, including Patrick Ravenhill Hulbert, killed at Gallipoli in 1915. These transcriptions materially improve the research map, but should be checked against the stones and glass before becoming a definitive monument register.

The booklet's incumbent list, pp. 27–29, runs from medieval clergy to Philip Howson in 2019. It also preserves two striking attributed accounts: a married vicar censured in the 1556 visitation and the indebted royalist Owen Evans, vicar from 1613, arrested after preaching on Trinity Sunday 1630 and later ejected during the Civil War period before returning at the Restoration. The full list and narratives need reconciliation with episcopal registers and institutional histories; absence of a year beside an early name must not be silently converted into a start date.

Dixon, pp. 23–25, describes the Town and Poor's Estate and Ann Goodwin's 1735 charity, gives selected payments from registers said to begin in 1688, and reports population figures for 1709 and 1801. These sections provide exact search terms and sums for charity papers, parish registers and churchwardens' accounts. Until those originals are inspected, the entries should be quoted or paraphrased as Dixon's transcription rather than represented as the editor's primary-source verification.

10. Consolidated chronology

Date	Event	Status
Prehistory–medieval	Multi-period occupation at 33 Thrapston Road: slight prehistoric traces, Iron Age settlement features, Saxon activity/tofts and medieval agriculture.	Verified
Late 12th century	Earliest surviving nave fabric and beakhead north doorway.	Verified
10 Sep 1248	Grosseteste's register addresses "J., vicar of the church of Spaldwick".	Verified
3 & 30 Mar 1251	Grosseteste's itinerary records the bishop at Spaldwick.	Verified
c.1250	South arcade constructed; thirteenth-century font survives.	Verified
1286–1299	Bishop Oliver Sutton repeatedly stays at Spaldwick; ten visits recorded.	Strongly supported
Early 14th century	Chancel and chancel arch; two coffin lids date from this period.	Verified
Mid–late 14th century	Four-stage west tower built; spire completed by end of century.	Verified
c.1370	Clerestory added.	Verified
17 Dec 1441	Wednesday market and two annual fairs granted to Bishop William of Lincoln.	Verified
c.1500	South chapel added; south aisle and porch rebuilt.	Verified
Early 16th century	Chapel roof/boss and oak screen.	Verified
1635	Five-bell ring cast by Hugh II Watts of Leicester.	Strongly supported
17th century	North nave buttresses and altered window; nave parapets rebuilt.	Verified
1810 and 1815	Restoration work.	Verified
1843	Nave reroofed.	Verified
1850	Greater part of spire rebuilt.	Verified
1863	Whole-church restoration; south aisle roof, glazing and tower arch. Edis plan catalogued but not inspected.	Verified

Date	Event	Status
1873	Upper spire restored; "J. Rivitt 1873" carved on upper light.	Verified
30 May 1904	Spire struck by lightning.	Strongly supported
1905	Spire repaired and partly rebuilt.	Verified
1908 / 1914	Chancel restored / tower restored.	Verified
Oct 1916	Organ reportedly installed.	Local account
1493	John Tryce reportedly leaves 6s 8d to the bells and 6s 8d to the Guild of the Blessed Mary.	Local account; will not inspected
1552	Inventory reportedly records four bells and a Sanctus bell.	Local account; inventory not inspected
1628	Lady Magdalin Hide reportedly gives the communion cup and cover-paten.	Local account; plate to inspect
1735	Ann Goodwin's charity established by indenture dated 21 October.	Local account; charity record not inspected
1761 / 1866–71	Reported bell repairs, rehanging and frame work.	Local account; parish evidence not inspected
1843–46	Nave reroofing under Mr Habersham; detailed costs transcribed by Dixon.	Local account alongside verified fabric date
1862–64	Edis restoration programme and costs described by Dixon.	Local account; ICBS and accounts not inspected
1865	Font reportedly releaded.	Local account

Date	Event	Status
1921–22	New treble added, former treble recast as second, ring rehung; chiming apparatus billed 1922.	Strongly supported
25 May 1953	Storm reportedly damages spire.	Local account
28 Jan 1958	Church listed Grade I.	Verified
Oct 1986	Clock reportedly restored by Robert Rushbrook.	Local account

Date	Event	Status
1992	Bells rehung; £50,000 reportedly raised to strengthen spire.	Local account
3 May 2002	First recorded peal on tower bells; tower and roof repair campaign also reported.	Supported
2007	Lead theft; replacement roof cost about £15,000.	Local account
2011–14	Second theft, fundraising, bat survey and stainless-steel reroofing.	Strongly supported
2016–17	Improvement/development fund seeks broader community use.	Local account
2022–24	Common Ground develops a multi-use vision and charitable structure.	Current
Oct–2 Nov 1916	Organ reportedly installed and dedicated; tower glazing and spire-light shuttering also reported in 1916.	Local account
1918	Nave clerestory reglazed; stone cross reportedly placed on chancel roof on 13 December.	Local account
1970s	Seventeenth-century chest and another furnishing reportedly stolen.	Local account
Jan 2020	Third edition of Stuart Dixon's history and guide completed.	Verified from inspected booklet
19 Sep 2026	Complete third-edition PDF inspected and author's website permission recorded.	Verified for this edition

11. Evidence audit: what is and is not established

Proposition	Basis	Status	Controlled use
Earliest surviving church fabric is late C12	Historic England list description	Verified	Safe.
Church and vicar existed by 10 Sep 1248	Grosseteste register, p.296	Verified	Safe; do not claim this proves the foundation date.
Grosseteste visited in March 1251	Grosseteste itinerary	Verified	Safe; itinerary does not identify his lodging or business.

Proposition	Basis	Status	Controlled use
Market and two fairs granted in 1441	Calendar of Charter Rolls / Gazetteer	Verified	Safe; correct any "fairs only" account.
Multi-period archaeology near church	Clelland & Mepham excavation	Verified	Describe phases; avoid unsupported "1000 BC" precision.
Bury Close was episcopal palace/estate centre	Taylor, RCHME remains, Sutton visits	Strongly supported	State interpretation and distinguish exact building plan as unresolved.
A church existed here before the Norman period	No inspected direct evidence	Unverified / not found	Do not state.
Black Death interrupted tower construction	Interpretation of masonry break	Inference	Attribute as a possibility only.
Spire height is 152 ft	VCH architectural account	Verified	46 metres is an editorial conversion.
Original five-bell ring dated from 1635	Owen detailed entry; inscriptions	Strongly supported	One bell was recast in 1921; note Owen summary's 1638 anomaly.
New treble added and former treble recast in 1921	VCH, bell inscription and multiple sources	Strongly supported	Inspect faculty and complete Bowell records.
Lightning strike occurred 30 May 1904	VCH	Strongly supported	Find contemporary report.
Storm damage occurred 25 May 1953	Spaldwick News retrospective	Local account	Find newspaper/PCC record.
Organ installed October 1916	Village timeline	Local account	Identify maker, faculty and source.
Clock restored by Robert Rushbrook in 1986	Village timeline/Spaldwick News	Local account	Inspect PCC/invoice evidence.
Bells rehung and spire strengthened in 1992	Village timeline/Spaldwick News	Local account	Find project papers and bellhanger.
2014 roof cost c.£27,000	Contemporary magazine and accounts	Strongly supported	Retain final accounts.
Church closure was planned in 2016	Contemporary report explicitly denied rumours	Contradicted	Describe sustainability discussion, not planned closure.
Common Ground's final design and status	Ongoing project	Current	Recheck each edition.
Booklet is a complete inspected source	Dixon third edition PDF, January 2020	Verified	Safe to cite as an attributed local publication; it does not independently verify its own claims.

Proposition	Basis	Status	Controlled use
Organ made by Mr Hewett and cost £85	Dixon, p.13	Local account	Retain attribution until faculty, invoice or maker record is found.
Clock contains fifteenth-century parts	Dixon, p.18	Plausible but unverified	Requires inspection by a qualified horological specialist and documentary research.
1628 plate was Lady Magdalin Hide's gift	Dixon, p.20; reported inscriptions and hallmarks	Local account	Inspect the objects and plate register; transcribe inscriptions exactly.
Detailed monuments and incumbent list	Dixon, pp.19–21 and 27–29	Supported	Use as a research route; verify monuments in situ and clergy against episcopal records.
Parish accounts and register extracts	Dixon, pp.23–25	Local account	Treat as Dixon's transcription until originals are inspected.

12. Spaldwick News evidence register

The Spaldwick News archive is unusually valuable because it documents not only events but decisions, costs, grants, setbacks and community attitudes. The following issues are the most important identified in the first full-text pass. Page references should be added from the original PDFs when cited in future editions.

Issue	Research value
Jun 2008	1904 lightning; bells silent until 1921; six bells and 1635 inscription.
Sep 2008	2007 lead-theft repair, £15,000 cost, insurance restrictions, SmartWater and access controls.
Feb 2009	1635 bells; 1921 and 1992 rehanging; £50,000 spire campaign; clock restoration.
May 2009	2002 tower/roof repairs used £20,000 fabric fund.
May 2012	Stuart Dixon's 36-page church booklet; roof appeal and proposed stainless covering.
Apr–Nov 2013	Grant refusals and awards; fundraising; bat survey; £25,000 target reached.
Apr–Jun 2014	Stainless-steel roof completed; delays, scaffold cost and final cost about £27,000.

Issue	Research value
Jan 2015	Accounts show £27,762 roof expenditure and funding categories.
Apr–May 2016	Future discussion, low attendance, £8,000 annual costs, improvement fund and community facilities.
Nov 2017	Development fund for toilet and kitchen facilities.
Mar / May 2019	Building history and 1953 storm claim; tower tours and security issues.
Apr 2022	Appeal for musicians to use the historic organ.
Dec 2022–2024	Common Ground initiative, consultation, events, architects and charity development.

COMPLETE INSPECTED LOCAL SOURCE Stuart Dixon's complete 36-page third edition of St James the Great, Spaldwick: A History and Guide (January 2020) is held as a supplied PDF and was inspected on 19 September 2026. It includes photographs and acknowledgements but no footnotes linking individual claims to sources. The author has permitted website use. Separate reuse of third-party photographs or quoted material should still be checked where ownership is not clear.

13. Source register

[C01] Historic England, Parish Church of St James, list entry 1330478: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1330478

[C02] Church of England Church Heritage Record 614185: https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/church-heritage-record-spaldwick-st-james-614185

[C03] Victoria County History, Huntingdonshire, vol. 3, "Parishes: Spaldwick": https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hunts/vol3/pp97-100

[C04] Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Huntingdonshire (1926), pp. 242–245: https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/hunts/pp242-245

[C05] F. N. Davis (ed.), Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste (1913), especially p. 296: https://archive.org/details/hists59237103

[C06] Samantha Letters, Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs to 1516: Huntingdonshire: https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/hunts.html

[C07] Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1427–1516, p. 24: grant of the Spaldwick Wednesday market and two annual fairs, 17 December 1441.

[C08] C. C. Taylor, "Medieval rural settlement in Huntingdonshire", Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society 79 (1990), especially the Spaldwick analysis, pp. 71–75.

[C09] Susan Clelland and Lorraine Mepham, "A prehistoric and Saxon site at Thrapston Road, Spaldwick", Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society 103 (2014); excavation at 33 Thrapston Road, Wessex Archaeology project 75070.

[C10] Rosalind M. T. Hill (ed.), The Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton, 1280–1299, Lincoln Record Society, cited by Taylor for Sutton's Spaldwick visits; individual entries should be collated in a future edition.

[C11] Nikolaus Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire and the County of Huntingdon and Peterborough (1954), p. 345; later editions should also be checked.

[C12] Spaldwick Parish Plan 2009: https://spaldwickparishcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Spaldwick-Parish-Plan-Final-040909.pdf

[C13] T. M. N. Owen, The Church Bells of Huntingdonshire (1899): https://www.whitingsociety.org.uk/old-ringing-books/owen-bells-huntingdonshire-03.pdf

[C14] Bowell Foundry Records: https://suffolkbells.org.uk/pdfs/BowellFoundryRecords.pdf

[C15] ChurchCrawler, St James Spaldwick: https://www.peterboroughchurchcrawler.com/spaldwick

[C16] CompLib, first peal on tower bells: https://complib.org/method/26144

[C17] War Memorials Online, internal Roll of Honour: https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/154090/

[C18] Spaldwick village timeline: https://www.spaldwick.com/information/history/100-years-of-spaldwick

[C19] Spaldwick.com church information: https://www.spaldwick.com/church

[C20] Spaldwick News archive, 2008–2026, locally held PDFs. The issues listed in section 12 were searched and reviewed for this edition; Spaldwick.com is the intended access point for the magazine and photographic archive.

[C21] Stuart Dixon, St James the Great, Spaldwick: A History and Guide, third edition (local illustrated booklet, January 2020), 36 pages. Complete author-supplied PDF inspected 19 September 2026. Earlier editions recorded in the booklet: February 2012 and July 2015. Author's permission for website use reported by Mark Heath on 19 September 2026. No page-level citations; acknowledgements on p.32 identify principal published and local contributors. Privately held website source pending an approved public location.

14. Important sources not yet inspected

- The underlying parish records used or transcribed by Stuart Dixon: churchwardens' accounts, registers, plate records, monument inscriptions, faculties, visitation material, charity papers and restoration accounts. Compare each record with the relevant booklet page and record agreements or corrections.
- S. Inskip Ladds, A History of Spaldwick, together with Inskip-Ladds records dated 1868–71 held by the Norris Museum.
- The remaining VCH footnotes for ecclesiastical history, advowson and charity evidence not already traced in this edition.
- The indexed entries for Spaldwick in Hill's edition of Bishop Oliver Sutton's rolls, to produce a visit-by-visit schedule and exact citations.
- The complete context tables and finds report for the 2010 Thrapston Road excavation, supplementing the published account.

- Lambeth Palace Library / ICBS file 05961, including Robert William Edis's 1863 plan and correspondence.
- Ely Diocesan Archive faculty files for 1843, 1850, 1863, 1873, 1905, 1908, 1914, 1916, 1921, 1986, 1992 and recent roof works.
- PCC minutes, churchwardens' accounts, quinquennial inspection reports, architects' specifications and final project accounts.
- Parish registers, glebe terriers, visitation returns, probate records and historic charity papers.
- Contemporary newspapers for the 1904 lightning strike and 1953 storm.
- Organ builder, specification, provenance and installation/faculty record; clock maker and original installation record.
- A full bell schedule from the tower, including weights, notes, diameters and frame/hanging history.

15. Priority research programme

Priority	Task	Why it matters
1	Inspect parish restoration accounts and Dixon's cited register material	Verify the 1843–46 and 1862–64 costs, identify J. Rivitt, test register extracts and document restoration campaigns.
2	Inspect ICBS file 05961 and diocesan faculty files	Provides primary evidence for restoration decisions, architects, costs and altered fabric.
3	Build a complete bell dossier	Resolves the 1635/1638 anomaly, 1921–22 work and 1992 rehanging.
4	Collate Sutton's Spaldwick visits	Adds exact dates, durations and wording to the already strong episcopal-residence evidence.
5	Search newspapers for 1904 and 1953	Tests the two major damage episodes and may supply vivid contemporary detail.
6	Document organ and clock from primary and specialist evidence	Test Dixon's maker, cost, dedication and mechanism dates; preserve Rushbrook's contribution with documentation.
7	Create repair-project archive	Preserve invoices, grants, surveys, photographs and testimony from 2002–14.
8	Record Common Ground as a living archive	Capture versions of plans, decisions and community views without confusing proposals with completed work.
9	Survey monuments and churchyard	Create a linked research master for memorials, burials, biodiversity and landscape.

Priority	Task	Why it matters
10	Catalogue photographs	For each image record date, creator, rights, viewpoint, visible fabric and source.

16. Claims not safe to strengthen

Unsafe statement	Controlled wording
"The church is Saxon / founded in 991."	No inspected evidence currently establishes that. Say only that the earliest surviving fabric is late twelfth century.
"The Black Death stopped construction."	Present as an interpretation, not a fact.
"All five present old bells are unchanged bells of 1635."	The original ring dated from 1635, but its former treble was recast by Bowell in 1921 and is now the second bell.
"All five old bells were cast in 1638."	Owen's detailed entry and inscriptions support 1635; retain the internal printed anomaly as a research note.
"The bells were restored entirely in 1921."	Related Bowell work is dated 1922; describe a 1921–22 campaign until accounts are inspected.
"The organ dates from 1916" without qualification.	Use "Dixon reports installation in October 1916, dedication on 2 November and a maker named Mr Hewett of Leicester" until the faculty or maker record is found.
"The church nearly closed in 2016."	The contemporary report denied closure rumours; describe a sustainability discussion.
"The 2014 roof cost exactly £27,000."	Reports and accounts give slightly different totals/categories; use approximately £27,000.
"No bats/war graves/ancient trees exist."	The Church Heritage Record is incomplete; absence of a database entry is not proof of absence.
"Common Ground will deliver [specific scheme]."	Plans are current and changing; date and source every description.
"The clock dates from the fifteenth century."	Dixon says parts may date from about the fifteenth century. Treat this as a hypothesis for specialist assessment, not a construction date.
"The booklet proves the register entries and restoration costs."	The booklet is an inspected secondary source. Attribute its transcriptions until the underlying parish records are inspected.

Unsafe statement	Controlled wording
"Website permission covers every image and quotation in the booklet."	Record Stuart Dixon's permission, but check separately owned photographs and third-party material before extraction or republication outside the complete booklet.

17. Research handover and future editions

Edition 2 adds the complete third edition of Stuart Dixon's history and guide and therefore recovers a much broader local account of the interior, furnishings, clergy, monuments, charities, registers and restoration work. It establishes the booklet's edition history, full coverage, acknowledgements and page-level research value. Its principal limitation is unchanged: many exact dates, costs and narratives are known through Dixon's synthesis rather than independently inspected parish records, faculties, invoices or contemporary press reports.

The next stage should use Dixon's details as a finding aid: match each claim to the churchwardens' accounts, registers, plate, monuments, visitation records, faculties and diocesan files; commission specialist assessment of the clock and organ; and catalogue the booklet photographs with creator and rights information. Future editions should improve evidence status rather than merely repeat more of the booklet's prose. Credit to Dixon and the named local contributors must remain visible.

DEFINITIVE ARCHIVE PRINCIPLE Spaldwick.com can hold the definitive developing archive because it combines Stuart Dixon's permitted booklet, past local research, Spaldwick News, photographs, personal contributions and independently checked records. This Research Master preserves provenance and uncertainty; the booklet should be offered as a named source, not silently absorbed into unattributed copy.