



That Was The Week That Was

The last week in June must have been one of the busiest in The Society's long and distinguished saga. There were FOUR Society-orchestrated events, each significant in its own right, each successful after its own fashion

Monday - Places

The fractious issue of school places was discussed at a meeting hosted by The Society at the Harpenden House Hotel. It was attended by county councillors, county education officers and leading members of the Harpenden Parents Group. The whole process from forecasting places needed to the offer of placements was examined, with the county officers both very knowledgeable and keen to engage in consultation. It was agreed that the already excellent communication between the HPG and the county authorities should be regularised, that local input into forecasting might be beneficial and the first tentative hints of some kind of Harpenden Schools Forum were mildly promoted

Tuesday - Plea

A high-powered gathering of NHS, local authority and other relevant parties met in the Council Chamber to consider The Society's plea to refurbish and extend the usage of the Harpenden Memorial Hospital. This was a most positive meeting, with the group agreeing to formulate a proposal of why and how 'the Red House' should be more fully utilised. (More info on Pg 6)

Wednesday - Planning

A score of Society officers and members joined together in the Harpenden House Hotel in an initial vibrant scrutiny of how the heart of the town might be rejuvenated. Tim Riley, Society committee member and finalist in the 2011 Young Architect of the Year competition, had prepared an impressive outline of how the town centre might be improved, what, within an overall plan, the priorities might be, and how most effectively such a consultation might proceed. It made for an invigorating and constructive evening. (More information on Pg 2)

Thursday - Pleasure

Poor old Omar Khuyyam had to make do with 'a Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread – and Thou besides me singing in the Wilderness'. On a summery evening at Batford Springs there was cheese as well as wine and bread. There was not one but forty genial companions from among The Society's membership and there were excellent volunteer guides to show us around this fine nature reserve, far from a wilderness. Admittedly there was no singing but it made for a lovely summer event.



(Above. Designing the town's future)



(Above. Enjoying the nature reserve)

The Harpenden in Question

being a series of editorial commentaries on important Harpenden issues that should challenge thought and encourage inquiry and action.

6. The Wish List



It was Vera Lynn's sustained vocalised opinion that 'wishing will make it so.' The Harpenden Society has been encouraged by those in local government to develop a 'wish-list' of additions and improvements to the town, most of them concerned with buildings and allied facilities. Initially this was, unsurprisingly, a random set of jottings, but it has recently become more coherent. As is mentioned on the front page, a community action plan is beginning to emerge, courtesy of the energetic leadership of Chris Marsden, The Society's Chairman, and Tim Riley, committee member and well-known community architect. Twenty members, many of them young parents involved with the Chairman's PULSE focus group and The Society's Education and Leisure Working Group, pored over the patterns of urban development proposed by Tim Riley and contributed tellingly to the business-like discourse.

Society members may be interested in and ready to comment upon the provisional findings, which position the notion of The Harpenden Society as a stakeholder or project enabler in influencing the creation of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for central Harpenden. The Society might well act as a major consultee in supporting a holistic vision for the heart of the town. Its aims would be

- * enlivening the High Street;
- * improving access to and the quality of community facilities;
- * reinforcing the town's identity and
- * encouraging community cohesion.

It is important to stress the many advantages of life in Harpenden and use these to carve out a special civic personality for the town. What must be avoided is sporadic attempts at remedy. What is required is a comprehensive plan – and then the grasping of opportunities as they occur to implement elements thereof. Tim Riley, recognising The Common as the key to the town's distinctive nature, argues that this is an asset that should be relished not just for its visual attraction but for its civic potential and he identifies some nine sites in the vicinity of the High Street for possible development. These include such imaginative ventures as moving the information hub at the somewhat isolated town hall to the newly planned library site where the old Argos store stands or completely refurbishing or re-building the public hall, possibly with its entrance being from off Station

Road (The full list of proposals may be found on The Society's website)

One approved concept that The Harpenden Society might care to champion is The Park Café. There was a tide of opinion that saw a café at Rothamsted Park as a priority and as a modest target for immediate and symbolic action. No mere eating and drinking house,

- * this amenity could support the existing sports activities;
- * it could act as a meeting and dining club for the Harpenden Seniors Club;
- * it could provide an educational base for children exploring the park or participating in sports activities;
- * it could provide toilet facilities for users of the Park and playground;
- * it could have a gallery space and offer some provision for adult education;
- * it could be a base to support the many events organised in the Park;
- * it could offer a hub for youth activities
- * it could, in general, be a meeting space that might also include a crèche for parents wishing to use the sporting and other facilities.

Such a multi-faceted community point seems irresistible and we would encourage the townspeople of Harpenden to lend their support and encouragement to this enterprise. For, as Vera Lynn went on tunefully to explain, 'wishes are the dreams we dream when we're awake.'

Eric Midwinter

Please send comments on this article or any other issues raised in this edition to the editor:
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Visit the Society's website –
www.harpendsociety.org.uk

Designed by Ron Taylor
Published by the Harpenden Society, printed by
Dor2Dor, Harpenden and distributed by a hard-working
group of fellow members.

Memos for Members

Extraordinary Happening

Please regard this as your formal 21 days notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting of The Society to be held at 7.30 pm Thursday 4 October at Park Hall, Leyton Road. Refreshments will be available from 7.0 pm.

This is a short meeting required to consider two agenda. One is the adoption of a revised Constitution for The Society. This revision is chiefly a matter of clarification and simplification and does not involve any basic shift in The Society's format. Copies of the revised constitution have been sent to all those members whose email addresses we have on record.

A copy of the draft is available on the website.

Anyone requiring a hard copy should apply to the Secretary, Bob Fletcher, (01582) 763036

The other agendum is the election of a President following the resignation of **Ian Fulton**. The Committee is please to announce that **Alison Steer** has agreed to accept nomination for this important post.

Alison Steer is well known in Harpenden but for those not fortunate enough to have come across her she has lived here for over 40 years. She is a teacher who has worked in schools in the East End and in the Harrow Road, London and from 1985 in Luton. She entered politics in 1996 representing East Harpenden and was Mayor of our District in 2006/07. She came off the Council in 2010 and is now an Honorary Alderman.

She is a Trustee of some important local charities and she served as a Governor of Crabtree Junior School for 21 years. Now she is no longer engaged in local politics she has accepted nomination as our President and will bring much wisdom, local experience and many helpful contacts to our work. She has four children and nine grandchildren.

Society Public Meetings

The EGM will be followed by a normal Society public meeting at which the speaker will be Professor **Maurice Maloney**, Director of Rothamsted Institute with a talk entitled:

How Technology can reduce our Dependency on Pesticides in Agriculture

The other two members' meetings are also open to the public and they are both at 8.0 pm (refreshments from 7.30 pm) at Park Hall. (wine and mince pies will be served at the December meeting)

Thursday 25 October

Tim Riley Director RCKaArchitects and Committee Member.

Suggestions for a Harpenden Town Council Community Plan

Thursday 6 December

The Ambulance service

Harpenden Emergency and Paramedic Services

Rainbow Alliance

Visitors to The Society's stand on the Common on Jubilee Day (below) and Discovery Day (Saturday 2 and 16 June) commented favourably on The Society's new livery of a rainbow with each colour of the spectrum representing one of The Society's seven Working Groups.



We shared our Discovery day presence with the Harpenden Parents Group who collected almost 300 signatures for their 'schools places' petition.



On each occasion The Society invited passers-by to make suggestions as to what The Society should be doing to improve life in the town, the offer sweetened by entry into a free draw for which the six prizes were free meals for two provided by That Little Place, Strada, The Old Cock Inn, The Skew Bridge and The White Horse, to whom are sincerest thanks.

Nearly 150 such suggestions were collected over the two Saturdays and these are being analysed by Committee members.

More Memos for Members

Your Society Needs You

As members are aware, The Society is developing seven Working Groups to advise the Committee on varied elements of what comprises the life of the town.

These are 'virtual' groups, in that they rarely or never meet as such. We are looking for volunteers who would be happy to receive occasional requests to give an opinion on this or that issue – or, of course, if they spotted some aspect that needed attention, to bring it to the group's attention. Until we are able to cover the bases of town-life completely, we remain over-reliant on one or other Committee member, whereas, patently, several heads are better than one.



Here is a reminder of where we have some gaps in our intelligence and advisory service – and remember we are not necessarily looking for experts but for a few volunteers with a commonsensical interest in these topics from a straightforward Harpenden viewpoint.

Public Order

Those annoying habits, what criminologists call 'incivilities', such as graffiti, noise and vandalism.

- the question of fire protection and the fire service
- consumer matters and the protection of customers

Transport

In particular, one or two commuters with an interest in trains

- but also one or two bus and taxi users, while parking is another ever-present issue

Built Environment

Someone with an interest in road maintenance (always a thorny problem) civic gardens and flower beds, street furniture etc., and

- a bit of a long shot, public utilities, especially water, but also gas and electricity.

Environmental Services

Conservation issues, clean air and pollution

- refuse collection and recycling (another of those everyday, always-with-us kind of issues)
- street cleaning and drainage

Economic Activity

We would hope to recruit a mixed group of retailers and customers in the shopping line, not forgetting all those other elements such as post office, telecoms, pubs, restaurants, estate agents etc

- then there is also the subject of work and business opportunities in the town.

You may have been involved professionally in one of these fields, you may have, for whatever reason such as a bad experience, have become concerned over one of these themes, best of all, you may simply wish to make a contribution to The Society's activities.

If you are interested or would like further details contact

editor@harpendsociety.com

Jarvis Foresters Property Development - An early contender for the 2012 Society Awards?



Above. Mike Peters, M.D. Jarvis Homes Ltd (in the blue shirt) with Society Committee members at the Foresters Development in July.

Membership contact

All queries to Barbara Ouston

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Ah yes, subscriptions. We find that some members have not renewed their subscriptions of £4.00 (£5.00 family membership) for this year. Please check you have not fallen into that forgetful category. Just a courteous reminder...

The Harpenden Society Awards 2011

Rosemary Horne, long-serving organiser of The Society's prestigious awards scheme, reports on last year's winners.

We had several nominations this year – not the usual sort, but very interesting ones all the same. The work done by Mr Patrick Fisher at Greenway Spinney was recommended to us and we went to have a look. Greenway Spinney, a splendid rural facility and wild life haven in the middle of a residential area, is being cleared and replanted by the Friends of the Spinney.



Mr Fisher has grown the materials and himself made the fence edging on to to Greenway. It is a work of rural art and skill with posts and wattle, and they must have caused Mr Fisher many sore fingers. We have sent him thanks for his work and a Letter of Commendation and look forward to seeing the completion of the work on the Spinney.

We also received nominations for two clocks.

There has been a clock in Southdown over the Grove House shop but for some years it has not been working. Bricrest Homes bought the premises in 2002 and have now replaced the old clock with this new one, 'with its bright new face that lightens that corner'. (Above top left)



The second one was the refurbished three face clock now on the M & Co. building. (Above right) Michael Weaver provided this clock when he owned C & A, but it had fallen asleep. M & Co. have repaired it and now once again it can tell all of us the time in the High Street. Both these clocks are most welcome, particularly at a time when we, like towns all over England, are trying to keep alive our High Streets. We congratulate and thank Bricrest Homes and M & Co. and have awarded them Certificates of Merit.



Above. Chris Marsden presenting a Certificate of Merit to Mike Taaffe, M.D. of Bricrest Homes. Below. From left to right – Chris Marsden Chairman of the Harpenden Society presenting a Certificate of Merit to M&Co, Julie Gharsellaiou Harpenden M&Co Store Manager, Michael Weaver, Town Mayor and Deanna Rogerson M & Co Area Manager.



Here is a message to all members. Please keep your eyes open for projects during 2012 and send nominations if you spot something that has special appeal or value. Send to the Society Secretary, Bob Fletcher fletcher.bob@ntlworld.com

Good Health News and more...

Representatives of the NHS, the local authorities, medical practices, pharmacists and others involved in health matters met on 26 June in the Town Council Chamber (and our thanks to Councillor **Bert Pawle** for his help in making those arrangements) to discuss the future of the Harpenden Memorial Hospital, popularly known as the **Red House**. The meeting was chaired by **Chris Marsden**, Chairman of The Society and was convened in pursuit of the paper, *Red House Revivified*, published by The Society's Health and Social Welfare Working Group.



David Law, Chief Executive of the Herts Community NHSTrust, opening the discussion, was positive in his outline of possibilities of modernisation of the Hospital and there was a most invigorating exchange of view with everyone contributing in constructive style.

Changes in the way the health service is being delivered and local aspirations for the Red House has spurred local councillors[, **Peter Lilley** MP, GPs as well as The Harpenden Society to meet the new Chief Executive of the Hertfordshire NHS Community Trust, **David Law**, to discuss solutions for the retention of the **Red House**.

County Councillor **Teresa Heritage** has undertaken, with **David Law's** help, to lead this feasibility project about the use of the Red House not only as a medical facility centre but also as a health and well-being centre for the town and the surrounding villages. **Teresa Heritage** and the Trust will be consulting with as many groups as they can to understand what

uses there could be for the **Red House** and to understand what gaps there are in health care and well-being provision in the locale.

Local citizens may also help by becoming members, and membership is free, of the Herts Community NHS Trust, and thus be in a position to influence the important decisions taken by that body which oversees much of our health provision..

Click on www.hertschs.nhs.uk/

Plane Speaking

From the Convenor of the Environmental Services Working Group, **John Davis**, on behalf of **LADACAN**

Members will be aware from the local Press that the operator of Luton Airport, LLAOL, has recently published a Plan to increase the number of passengers and overflights by just over 50%, as compared with last year. Even if many of the additional travellers access the Airport by rail or the M1, it seems likely that the immediately local road network (Lower Luton Road, A 1081) will have to accommodate an additional 2/3,000 vehicles a day going to and returning from the Airport. In addition, the planned development will lead to an increase in the number of planes going over during the 6 to 7.30 a.m period and, almost certainly, at night too.

If this concerns you, please let our Editor know: some may think the extra inconvenience is worth it to get more frequent flights to holiday destinations or are taken in by the 'Additional Jobs' claim; but modern airports are becoming progressively 'self-service' and it is doubtful whether Harpenden itself will greatly benefit in that respect.

For those seriously concerned, LADACAN has joined with other local groups to oppose any such plan:

we feel 'enough is enough'

Harpenden House Hotel

The Society wish to make public its most grateful appreciation to the owners and management of the Harpenden House Hotel who have generously offered to make accommodation freely available for Committee meetings and seminar-type meetings.