



Annual Report 2012/2013

Celebration 2013 Looking back - Looking forward

All The Harpenden Society members,
friends, helpers and interested Harpenden
residents are invited to
CELEBRATION 2013

7.15 pm Thursday 11 April 2013
Garden Suite
HARPENDEN HOUSE HOTEL



Community Planning for the High Street... Reviving the Red House debate... Suggesting a Cafe for Rothamsted Park... Engaging in discussions about the new Library, Schools Places, the Public Halls and other Local Issues... Organising a Primary Schools 'What do I like about Harpenden' Competition... and much else...

a chance to chat with members of The Society's Committee, together with
The Society's brief, formal annual general meeting.

We invite members, friends and helpers of The Society and interested Harpenden residents to join us and look forward to welcoming you all to this celebration of achievement and future intent.

'CREATIVE VISIONARY AND FRIENDLY CRITIC'

says **Chairman Chris Marsden**, (right) 'it's two years since I became Chairman and I am delighted to report that The Society has taken several encouraging steps in making its presence felt in many aspects of the civic and social life of the town. We have, of course, no power, save that of persuasion and sometimes it's tough going acting the role of the friendly critic of the public and commercial providers of services and amenities to Harpenden. My judgement is that our determination to become a genuine civic society in the fullest sense of the word is gradually coming to fruition and we wanted to take this opportunity to share our sense of burgeoning achievement with our many members and friends.'





'OUR WATCHDOG'

says The Society's freshly elected President Alison Steer, 'this is an exciting time for The Society, having a new Committee with plenty of vision and a real interest in Harpenden. The new Working Groups have lots to keep them busy...Let us all now join together and support our Harpenden Society. It is our watchdog and campaigner to ensure that Harpenden embraces positive future development while remaining the happy place we call our home town.'

BIG ISSUES

HOPE FOR THE HIGH STREET

Central to The Society's work this year has been its campaign to sustain the town's attractive high street. Tim Riley, progressive architect and Society committee member, presented his Harpenden Community Plan while the 'Thriving High Street Network' aka The Society's Economic Activities Working Group was also prominent in this regard. Two aspects especially caught the civic eye.

Firstly, The Society put forward the idea that the Lower High Street should become a 'Shared Space', after the model pioneered by the Dutch traffic engineer Haus Monderman, whereby, with minimal expenditure and signage, cars and pedestrians might intermingle safely, a particular boon for young families and older people who wish to move freely in front of the new library.

Secondly, we have argued for Thompsons Close (above right) becoming a pedestrian area, with some vehicular access for loading, offering a public gathering space for an extension of the Sunday market, arts and crafts and a portable stage for local school bands. Both these suggestions have commanded much support.



LENDING THE LIBRARY A HAND

We have been granted 'stakeholder' status in consultation about the library service and have been active in pressing for the fullest possible use of the old Argos building (below) when it is taken over by the library and Youth Connections. We have urged the case for local groups and societies using the premises when vacant and we have offered to recruit volunteers to help staff the library and thereby extend opening hours.



JUBILEE JUBILATION

Donating £1500, The Society went halves with the Town Council in commissioning three locally designed structures to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee. These are to be found at the High Street Sensory Garden, (below left) Southdown Rose Garden Below centre) and Batford Green.



RADICAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PUBLIC HALLS

Conscious of the growing local disenchantment with the shabbiness and outmodedness of this amenity, (below) we have taken the initiative in earnest and imaginative discussions about refurbishment and even a total rebuild. We now have a representative on the Harpenden Public Halls Customer Forum enabling us to raise this issue the more forcibly. Could there be a focus here, or maybe in the new library, for the wide-ranging arts and all-inclusive centre for arts of all kinds being advocated by our Education and Leisure Working Group?



CAFE IN THE PARK

A popular notion attracting backing on all sides has been our pressure for a multi-purpose cafe in Rothamsted Park. The idea is the brainchild of PULSE, The Society's focus group of young parents, capably convened by committee member Vicky Evans. An architectural pattern (below) has already been devised, while a public survey on the question has shown a remarkable degree of enthusiasm for the concept. We also have a representative on the Rothamsted Park Management Committee at which the case for a cafe and also other improvements, such as modernised play equipment, are being urged.



HOUSES AND MORE HOUSES

Everyone will be familiar with the threat to Harpenden from over-development and The Society continues to work closely with the Harpenden Green Belt Association in monitoring these perils. Our Built Environment Working Group estimates that, last year, planning permission was granted for a hundred housing units and that, at the very least, a hundred units will be built annually over the next five years. Developers are seeking spaces, for instance at disused small warehouse/factory sites and these incremental additions insidiously cause extra pressure on the town's facilities, such as schools.



DESIGN FOR HARPENDEN LIFE

You will note in this commentary and in **The Harpenden Society Spring News** and all our other latest presentations that Ron Taylor, our energetic Publicity Officer, has created a modern image and logo for The Society, more fitting for the needs of the civic society of an up-to-date, busy and prosperous urban settlement. This work was originated by local designers based on the Harpenden High Street. (see the front page of the Spring News)



Plane Speaking

The Society, disappointed by the cavalier approach of its protagonists, has tightened its attitude to the planned expansion of Luton Airport. The cutting edge in our thinking has been the likely adverse effects on transport, both rail and road, through Harpenden should the airport, as it hopes, double its number of passengers to 18m over the next twelve years. We have calculated that, apart from the stress on already overstretched trains, this would mean almost 3m extra cars yearly travelling through the town, that is, a frightening 7,500 a day



Photos throughout (except where stated) courtesy of Harpendia.com. Harpenden's on line magazine and video channel.

Not Missing the Bus

Our newly formed Transport Working Group commented on to the Herts County Council transport strategy document, welcoming its proposals but advocating the need for monitoring progress. One area where we have seen a response is in improved information at bus stops and in the gradual introduction of real time displays at central points. Computer and mobile devices are increasingly being used for timetables but there is still a call for the 'old-fashioned' version. After a little persuasion, we cajoled the Herts County Council to provide these for the town hall and library.



Traffic congestion is another problem. We undertook a survey on Victoria Road in regard of access to the planned coming of the Free School to the old library/college site. Although flows themselves were only rarely impeded, there is patently no provision at all for what is the often lengthy business of delivering and collecting young children from school.

EVENTS, DEAR BOY, EVENTS

...as Harold Macmillan remarked, and The Society's year has been marked by many

Public Meetings

We took the bold decision to associate all public meetings directly with our own work and activity, usually through the medium of one of our seven Working Groups

January 2012 *Whither Planning* - discussion of the latest changes in the planning regime

February *There's a Place for Us...Maybe* - discussion of the knotty issue of school places

March *Annual General Meeting*

October 4th *Extraordinary General Meeting* at which Alison Steer was elected President and Ian Fulton, the outgoing President, was warmly thanked for his magnificent service, after which

Wheat Trials - Professor Michael Maloney of Rothamsted Research presented a stalwart defence of the controversial GM food trials

October 25th *Harpenden Community Plan* - discussion of The Society's inventive proposals for the Harpenden town centre

December *Saving Lives in Harpenden* - a lively account by paramedic Tony Stone of the ambulance emergency service

Outdoor events

The Society was prominently en fete on the Common on **2nd June** for the Jubilee celebration and on **16th June** for Discovery Day. We shared our stall on Discovery day with our friends from the Harpenden Parents Group who recruited much extra support for their campaign to solve the schools places question.

The summer event was a pleasing June evening at the Batford Springs Nature Reserve to celebrate its longstanding link with us and the change from District to Town Council control, while at an equally pleasant May Sunday lunch-time, a party, hosted by membership secretary Barbara Ouston, was given to thank all our 34 doughty newsletter distributors.

Society Annual Awards

This year's winners of the prestigious Harpenden Society Awards for projects that have added special appeal or value to the town's environment will be announced at Celebration 2013.



ORDER ORDER

The Public Order Working Group provides a valued service in mediating through to members and others warnings and advice about local crime and misbehaviour. We lobbied the police service about the need for extra precautions in respect of the threatened demonstration in the summer against the GM trials at Rothamsted Research; all passed off peacefully and we received a letter of thanks from the agricultural research station for our efforts.

We are arguing strongly for a small police point or office to be included in the new library premises and - a significant coup - we have booked Herts newly elected and extremely busy Police and Crime Commissioner, David Lloyd, to speak at our first public meeting of the next season on Thursday 26th September.



'HOLD THE FRONT PAGE'

...for our hard-working Press Officer, Steve Gledhill who has ensured throughout the year that we have secured plenty of coverage in the local press and on local radio – and our thanks, too, for all those who have helped us in this endeavour. Here are two or three of our leading headlines in the last three months

HERTS ADVERTISER MAY 10
Time to recognise shop's work in getting clock running again

THE St ALBANS REVIEW OCT. 24
Better late than never for town's Jubilee

HERTS ADVERTISER NOV 1
Town's future put in spotlight

HERTS ADVERTISER NOV 29
Society to look at role of paramedics

MEMBERSHIP

With 35 new members during the year, membership has held up well at 653 households, embracing 1067 members, making us one of the largest civic societies in the region. In addition, The Harpenden Society News is delivered to 46 schools, the library and other organisations. But there's plenty of room for more...please join...contact membership secretary Barbara Ouston membership@harpendensociety.com (01582) 760625 9 Aplins Close, Harpenden, Herts AL5 2PZ

Our members support us diligently with their valued donations and in other practical ways, always in the knowledge that in promoting the well-being of Harpenden we represent the whole of the town

WILLINGLY TO SCHOOL

Of The Society's efforts to assist the Harpenden Parents Group in seeking an answer to the conundrum of school places in Harpenden, its chairman Ben Bardsley writes 'The Harpenden Society's meeting in February gave us a platform and raised our profile. The meeting organised by The Harpenden Society between HPG and Herts county councillors and officers also helped'

And as those attending CELEBRATION 2013 will discover, we organised a broadly based arts competition for which eleven out of the town's thirteen primary schools registered, with the theme 'What do I like I like about Harpenden'. Prizewinners will be announced on the evening.



REVIVING THE RED HOUSE

The Harpenden Memorial Hospital is close to the beating heart of Harpenden, Through the good offices of our Health and Social Welfare Working Group, we have been to the fore in the establishment of The Red House Forum, a task force dedicated to the revival and refurbishment of this prized Harpenden asset. A high-powered group, it is comprised of local authority figures, professionals including local doctors and a pharmacist, concerned local people and, very much not least, the Chief Executive of the Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust. Peter Lilley MP has also become involved and has attended a Forum meeting. The Society is proud to have played its seminal part in resurrecting a debate that appeared to be languishing.

Make a date in your diary for this exciting evening. April 11th
Harpenden House Hotel
Garden Suite

Celebration 2013

Looking back-Looking forward

- 7.15 Doors open. Live Jazz Band
- Bar opens + light refreshments + coffee and tea
- Watch The Harpenden Society video
- Discuss issues with the working groups
- View the mini exhibition
- 8.00 Official AGM matters
- Election of officers; Presentation of accounts; appointment of auditors etc.
- 8.30 School Arts competition winners
- 8.45 The Harpenden Society Society Awards winner
- 8.55 Membership drive prize promotion
- 9.00 Live music
- 9.15 Guests depart
- NB. All times subject to minor change