

Rail infrastructure under severe strain

Rail infrastructure from Harpenden is struggling and things are likely to get significantly worse unless urgent action is taken.

While there is understandable concern about the proposed developments in North East Harpenden (738 homes) and North West Harpenden (580 homes), and the additional pressure these will place on already stretched transport infrastructure, there are also significant developments planned just beyond our immediate area which are likely to have an even greater impact:

- **Hemel Garden Community – comprising 11,000 homes**
- **Expansion of Redbourn village – comprising 5000 homes, many of which might find Harpenden Railway Station more convenient than either Hemel or St Albans stations.**
- **Expansion of Luton Airport, effectively doubling its size and significantly increasing passenger numbers.**
- **The rail freight terminal at Radlett which will be fed by goods trains that consume track capacity.**
- **Construction by Universal Studios of a “Disneyland-style” theme park south of Bedford, expected to attract 8.5 million visitors to the area from 2031.**

Whilst acknowledging that new homes are needed, and inward investment will be good for jobs, the Society needs to know that the growth will be managed, and that the infrastructure will be put in place, to protect public transport.



Engagement with Decision-Makers

The Harpenden Society is actively engaging with the District Council, which approves new developments; the County Council, which manages the road network; and our MP, who can help influence Network Rail, Thameslink, and the Secretary of State for Transport, who has approved the expansion of Luton Airport.



Article continues overleaf

Article concludes

We have raised concerns with our local MP, Victoria Collins, focusing on rail capacity and reliability. Victoria acknowledged our concerns about recent rail performance and the increased pressure from local development. She also relayed a response from the Department for Transport to her written parliamentary question which accepted that performance had been poor, but suggesting there had been some overall improvement. More recent data shows that this improvement was short lived.

A subsequent meeting between Ms. Collins, Thameslink, and Network Rail identified two main causes of recent disruption:

1. Staffing shortages over the summer (GTR responsibility)
2. Signaling failures in December (Network Rail responsibility)

The Society will not let this issue drop. It is clear that the fragmented responsibility for transport infrastructure is working against residents. While the proposed move to a unitary authority, the forthcoming Railway Bill, and the potential creation of Great British Railways may eventually bring greater accountability, these changes will take years to implement—and longer still to deliver tangible benefits.

Having sort input from members, and other local interest groups, there appear to be three main issues;

1. That rail capacity will be increased to meet the increased population, despite competing pressures from Luton Airport and Universal Studios
2. The East Carpark maintains, if not increases, current capacity, and the access to the site is significantly improved to reduce congestion and improve safety on Station Road
3. And future commercial and housing developments are considered holistically, with transport infrastructure planned, funded, and ideally delivered, before construction begins, not as an afterthought.

Martyn Reed



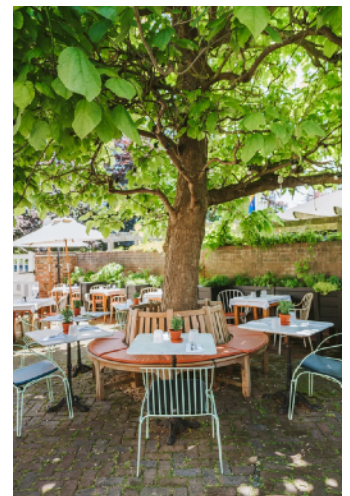
PUBLIC MEETING JUNE 11

'From Soil to Supper: Challenge, Passion and Restaurant Reality'

Revealing the realities of running modern restaurants alongside inspiring local solutions.

Andrei Lussmann shares insights from 24 years of serving sustainable, affordable food through rising costs and competition.

ALSO FoodSmiles highlight how their initiatives connect communities through food grown locally.



This meeting at the High Street Methodist Church starts at 7.30pm and opens with a short AGM. BOOK YOUR SEAT VIA The Harpenden Society web site. www.harpendensociety.org

Financial Partnership needed to secure the future of Rothamsted Manor

Rothamsted Manor is a Grade I listed building of outstanding historic and architectural significance. Ensuring its long-term care and preservation is essential. However, the substantial scale of ongoing and future investment required for the Manor sits outside the capabilities and charitable purposes of Lawes Agricultural Trust (LAT) and cannot be supported through LAT funds.



LAT is therefore seeking a new guardian to take on the stewardship of the Manor, while respecting its heritage, sensitivity, and historic importance. LAT have therefore appointed Savills as agents to market the Manor, the walled garden and ornamental garden, attached buildings and the outbuildings.

The objective to seek a party who will take on the Manor on a long leasehold basis, which will ensure the upkeep of the property while also ensuring that, in the long term, its ownership remains in LAT's hands.

Background

Lawes Agricultural Trust is the long-term guardian of the remarkable legacy of Sir John Bennet Lawes, founder of what is now Rothamsted Research, who was born at the Manor in 1814. LAT's activities and income exist to support his enduring vision by funding agricultural scientific research for the public benefit.

Over the past five years, LAT has explored a range of potential uses for the Manor, through our managing agent, Rothamsted Enterprises Ltd (REL), including as a wedding venue, events space, and filming location. While these activities have attracted strong interest and delivered a busy programme, they have not generated sufficient surplus income to fund the significant capital investment required.

The Decision

This decision has been taken by the LAT Board of Trustees with care and sensitivity, following a detailed review and sustained efforts to retain the Manor within LAT's direct management. As a charity, LAT must ensure that its resources are applied in line with its charitable objectives.

Continuing to invest in the Manor at the required level would divert funds away from LAT's primary purpose of supporting agricultural scientific research for the public benefit.

Seeking a new guardian represents an exciting opportunity for the right partner to take on a unique historic building - bringing vision, expertise, and appropriate investment - to secure the future of this much-loved local asset.

LAT remains fully committed to its charitable purpose and mission. This approach will enable the Trust to uphold its governance responsibilities, continue funding agricultural research, and ensure that the Manor is cared for sustainably for generations to come.

As a charitable trust, LAT has a duty to safeguard its assets, which include not only the Manor but all other assets. LAT is under a statutory duty to show that it has followed appropriate practices to get the best value from this transaction and that it is in the best interests of the charity. Our agents will assess all offers and provide us with advice



on these, to ensure we meet our obligations and duties. Any enquiries should be directed to them at cholborow@savills.com

Jeff Phillips, Chair of the Harpenden Society, comments:

It is obvious that the condition of the building has deteriorated in recent years and significant investment is required. We support LAT in wanting the best for the building, but would also like to be assured that the new owners will allow the residents of Harpenden to continue to appreciate and enjoy this wonderful building, both from outside and inside, as we have become accustomed.

Through direct representation, and by working with planners, we will continue to monitor developments and keep members advised.

Ron Taylor

You can't beat the taste of home grown fruit & veg.

Having read Katharine Tate's brilliant article in the Winter edition of Hello Harpenden, I wanted to put something together myself to keep up the support for eating fruit and veg, and what better way than to grow your own!

Growing fruit or veg doesn't have to be time consuming or require a large garden or allotment. You also don't need lots of knowledge to grow your own food. You simply need the inclination to want to grow your own. Any why not? When researched, it's not just the exercise or fresh air you get from gardening that's good for you. Studies have shown that people who grow their own eat 70% more fruit and veg than the national average. So, you're getting the best fresh food and less stress. What could be better?

Let's have a look at what you can grow. My advice to anyone wanting to grow fruit or veg would be to grow something that you enjoy eating already. This could be strawberries, tomatoes or potatoes. It could be anything, as long as the UK climate is compatible! Think about seasons and what grows when. This would be ideal if you're looking to have something from kitchen to garden all the year round. Do remember that fruit and veg doesn't grow very quickly but you can get high yields even from just a few plants.

If you have a good-sized garden, you



could benefit from perennial edibles such as soft fruits or fruit trees. A greenhouse would be enough to support a few tomato plants. Raised beds are great for growing lots of things, even if you just wanted some herbs to spice up your

Sunday lunches, containing everything in a controlled space that is easy to feed and water, and manage weeds.

Not got much space? A balcony or windowsill would do. There are lots of varieties that cope with confined spaces such as cherry tomatoes or strawberries in hanging baskets. You can grow vertically, using a trough with a trellis for climbing beans, whether French or runner, or cucumbers. Potatoes do just as well in a bag, which certainly makes it easier than having to dig them out in autumn. A windowsill can house herbs such as basil or parsley.



Although it's May now, you can still visit a local garden centre and buy young fruit and veg plants. It's not too late to start and bring out the inner good life in yourself.

Renata Rybczyk-Savage, blog writer, 'Feed a Nation From an Allotment'



Unitary Authority decision could cost Hertfordshire residents an additional £30 million a year in council taxes

The story so far....The Minister has, to date, decided five cases, in respect of Hampshire, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Surrey. With the exception of Surrey (2 authorities), the Minister has chosen the weakest financial option, agreeing to 3 authorities for Suffolk and Norfolk, and 5 for Hampshire and Essex.

The Hampshire case imposes an additional financial burden of c.£30+million per annum, versus a saving to residents of c.£50+million (from 4 authorities) – a swing of £800million over ten years! However, there doesn't appear to have been an attempt at maximizing Labour influence, given the political realities of the existing elected Hampshire authorities.

However, in Essex, the optimal case (3 authorities) is estimated to deliver c. £170million net over ten years, versus the chosen structure delivering only c. £70million. However, this decision is unashamedly aimed at maximising the number of councils currently controlled by Labour.

So, what do these decisions tell us about the likely outcome for Hertfordshire?

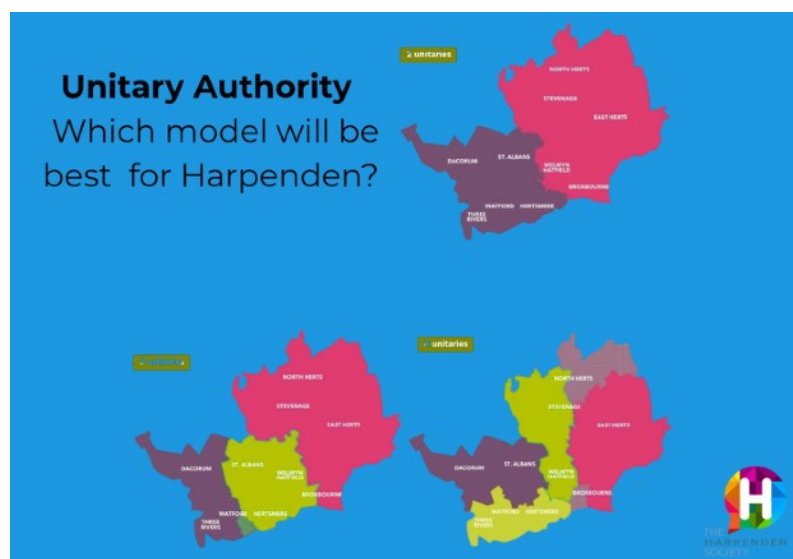
The Minister argued that local identity and community connection was the driving argument behind his decisions – questionable in the case of Surrey – and the financial argument was rejected. Funny that the original logic was to generate more efficient councils and improved operating economics. Furthermore, the Minister has ditched the Government's original population threshold of 500,000. His decisions are also claimed to support local growth and housebuilding priorities, although no logical argument for this has been given.

Our research suggests that the Minister is likely opt for a 4-authority model.

This is estimated again to be the financially weakest option, leading to the sacrifice of approaching c.£300million in savings over ten

years, when compared with the 2-authority model favoured by HCC itself and SADC. This decision would also maximise authorities currently controlled by Labour. The amalgamation of districts may well lead to some improvement in efficiency, but fragmenting the county council services works in the opposite direction.

With a 4-authority model, 10 districts become 4, countered by the county council splitting 1 into 4, and in terms of management teams, the allocation of those county services across 4 units and the associated funding, is highly likely to generate more confusion for users and residents, with the inevitable duplication of roles.



As you will recall, the intention of this whole exercise was to reduce complexity, and through simplification, produce more efficiency in the provision of local authority services, an intention which, at first glance, appears to be being sacrificed in the interests of political gerrymandering where possible.

In our case, this 'simplification' is going to cost residents of Hertfordshire an extra £30million per annum....

So why bother???

Jeff Phillips

The Local Plan and the impact of Section 106 financial contributions on our community

Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act

Members and residents may not be aware that an important provision within the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 helps ensure that infrastructure and public services are improved when major housing developments are built.

Planning obligations under “Section 106” are legal mechanisms that make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms.

These agreements allow local authorities to require developers to contribute towards local infrastructure and services needed as a result of that new development.

How is Section 106 money used?

S106 contributions can be used to support:

- Highways and transport improvements
- Education and school places
- Health services
- Affordable housing
- Parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities

They may also be used to mitigate the wider impact of development on the local community



Who can apply for Section 106 funding?

In some cases, community organisations can apply for S106 funds. Eligible groups may include:

- Community organisations operating on a not for profit basis
- Parish or neighbourhood councils
- Local voluntary or community organisations

S106 money available in St Albans District

Currently St Albans District Council (SADC) is expected to receive over £4 million from a combination of money received and money due, of which £0.4 million relates to Harpenden.

As Harpenden has not experienced many large scale housing developments, of late, and as a result, the town has received relatively limited benefit from Section 106 funding. However, with significant development proposals emerging in North East and North West Harpenden, this situation will soon change. The Harpenden Society is keen to ensure that:



1. Appropriate levels of S106 funding are secured from developers
2. Funds are allocated to infrastructure that matters most to Harpenden residents
3. The funds allocated are delivered and spent as intended

The Society will monitor Section 106 contributions to ensure they are paid and used effectively, in liaison with other interested stakeholder, which will help maintain the quality of life and infrastructure that resident's value.

Watch this space.

Peter Syme & Martyn Reed

Sewage pollution of River Lea a growing concern

There is renewed environmental concern about the duration and quantity of untreated sewage polluting the River Lea as it flows downstream through Harpenden after being discharged from Thames Water's East Hyde water treatment works. (below)



In 2024, according to TW's own data, the works discharged sewage for a total of 353 hours, which is a notable increase from previous years. In the most recent six-month period for which figures have been released by TW, there was a total duration of sewage discharged into the river at East Hyde of 69 hours 30 minutes.

Harpenden's much smaller (and not permanently manned) local water treatment plant, at the northern end of Piggottshill Lane, has also been found responsible for significant sewage discharges into the Lea. The Harpenden Society has obtained statistics, covering the period November 2025 to February 2026, which reveal the following raw sewage discharge durations from the Piggottshill Lane plant: 14 November, 14hrs 15min; 18 December, 10hrs; 8 January, 5hrs 15min; 6 February, 16hrs 30min.

Data released by TW for the whole of its 1500 square mile catchment area indicate a regrettable history of discharging sewage from its plants into local waterways, with a total of 196,414 hours discharged last year, which was a 163% increase from 2022.

Harpenden Society member John Smith, who has been monitoring such disturbing local river pollution data, draws attention to the corresponding increases in sickness reported by the national 'Surfers Against Sewage' campaign. He rightly points out that in summer, when the weather is warm, children paddle, splash and play in the River Lea along Marquis Lane recreation field and at Wheathampstead.

John Smith suggests that the Town Council should consider putting up riverside

notices warning of the environmental hazards of raw sewage in the Lea. Meanwhile, he advocates regular publication by the local authority of sewage discharge data which are currently not easy to access, while commending Harpenden MP Victoria Collins for her efforts in highlighting the sewage-in-rivers issue at a national level at Westminster.



New Piggottshill Lane treatment works under development.

But he says more needs to be done to address the challenges at local level, including an invitation to the Harpenden Society and its many environmentally conscious members to take up the challenge.



Existing Piggottshill Lane treatment works

At the Society's Public Meeting in January, further updating the repeatedly-delayed Local Plan, St Albans District Council leader Cllr Paul de Kort pointed out that the Piggottshill Lane treatment works was being expanded, not least to deal with the additional sewage flows from all the new homes projected in the Local Plan. Work is already underway (see picture). John Smith says TW should nevertheless provide solid reassurances that the extra capacity at the plant will not only be sufficient but that it will be in place before the new housing development is started.

Doubts must arise as to TW's ability to meet such a commitment in view of what is England's largest water company being currently £16 billion in debt and seeking a financial lifeline amid reported creditor conflicts.

How easy do you think it is for a Harpenden student to get their first job?

The Harpenden Society recognises the importance the younger generation has in their contribution to the future of Harpenden on completion of their education. We wanted to find out their views on entering the world of work. Read on...

Growing up you would hear all about your parents doing paper rounds and weekend jobs, but as young adults get older and seek more independence– it seems increasingly difficult to find employment.



In recent years, there has been developing difficulty for youths to find their first job, particularly in smaller towns –like Harpenden– where opportunities are low and competition is high. Students are stuck in a cycle of applying for jobs without experience yet cannot gain experience without a job.

Limitations in opportunities

After speaking with a range of Sixth-form students, there are a multitude of barriers that seem to affect a student's inability to find employment. Not only must they be able to work around a strict educational schedule, but finding a placement that is sealed with a secure contract so as to not be taken advantage of, is proving to be a gruelling task.

A student in the local area expresses that employers are less likely to hire younger students.

“They think younger people are less responsible and are less inclined to hire them,” she said. This emphasises the cyclic nature of finding a job that I previously stated, due to the lack of

experience and hesitation from employers, students go into a job with one leg to stand on. Their selling point on why they should get the job is solely based on themselves with no evidence of their ambitions and perseverance.

Impact on School Life

For many students, finding a job not only has an effect on their free time– it can also impact their experience they need to gain from school and education.

One student said that it is often difficult to balance “school work and part time job”, especially when working thirteen hours a week alongside their education. This added layer of stress can be detrimental to the result of a child's exams, they are dividing their focus in half. However, there is a positive in this situation, some students feel more inclined to work harder and more efficiently in a school environment, providing them the ability to earn both a stable income and work experience.

On the other hand, this pressure can be overwhelming, leaving many exhausted after balancing two responsibilities at once. Another student admits that the heavy work load can be extremely tiring and leaves little space for “revision and downtime”. This further highlights the strain young adults are put under in a great effort to better their future ideals.

What are the solutions?

Despite the aforementioned difficulties, there are many ways that Harpenden are trying to combat these struggles.

The primary solution is a local programme called, Kings Trust Teams. This initiative aims to develop personal skills, earn new qualifications that provide vital experience for youths aged 16-25 years old.

Now there are many other solutions but as a young adult myself, this is the best way to achieve well rounded experience and development in subjects that you are personally interested in. The question remains– what else can be done to support young people?

Does Harpenden provide employment for young people?

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Did you find any difficulties when trying to find a job?
- Was it easy to find employment– was there any advertisement?
- How does this impact your school life? –is it a heavy work load?



ANNABELLE N.

Generally feels as though it's difficult for youths to find jobs in the area due to a surge in demand for employment.

Feels as though employers view younger workers as "less responsible" and are less inclined to hire

There were advertisement posters around her local rugby clubhouse

Can be difficult to balance with school life but generally okay with an agreeable amount of working hours.

JOSE

It took a while to find, especially with a good contract so she couldn't get dropped, employers are looking for people with work experience so it is extra difficult for young adults.

Barely anytime on weekends for work on weekends especially for revision, working 16 hours a week as a 18year old, yet makes her feel more inclined to work at school.



ANNA PC

Yes to a heavy work load, very tiring. Takes up a lot of time after school and leaves little time for homework and revision as well as down time.

NICK DPB

Feels as though the only way for youths to get work is through familial connections or having to find work outside of Harpenden, there's not enough opportunities.

Editorial and survey written and conducted by 6th Form student Ruby Tattersall

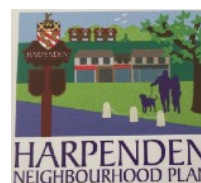


HARPENDEN SOCIETY SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION:

Harpenden Town Council have established a Business Forum which covers a wide range of activities.

The Neighbourhood Plan has policies to encourage local business and employment.

HTC should be encouraged to support employment opportunities for young people and make local businesses aware the issues.



Society flies its flag at Seniors Fair

As one of the record 45 standholders/exhibitors at the year's **Harpenden Seniors Fair**, held at the **Eric Morecambe Centre** at the beginning of April, the **Harpenden Society** welcomed visitors to its stand. Some were obviously already **Society** members, but the eye-catching stand display, manned by two committee members, also attracted a number of non-member enquirers, wanting to know what the Society was all about, often expressing surprise that it was established 96 (yes, ninety six) years ago. They were able to pick up information and membership joining flyers and/or copies of the latest **Society** newsletter.



Harpenden Museum on the lower level of the EMC which was on 'open house' while the Fair was in progress.

Eleven Trust ladies, helped by four Harpenden Inner Wheel members, did sterling service behind the refreshment counter where visitors could enjoy tea or coffee as well as snacks and cakes, many of which were home baked by 14 volunteers.



The **Harpenden Trust** is to be congratulated for once again, for the fourth consecutive year, organising such a splendidly supported event, not least for its advanced publicity around the town, notably via a highly-visible banner on the Common. Few of Harpenden's senior citizens could have been unaware of the date, time and place of the 2026 Fair.



Backed by a four-person organising committee behind the scenes, about 40 Harpenden Trust member volunteers were recruited 'on the ground' on the day. They included fourteen stewards charged with welcoming visitors and directing them to the three different areas of the EMC occupied by the Fair: the main auditorium; the adjacent café/refreshment area; and large upper function room. Visitors' attention was also directed to the

Among the other plaudits received by the Trust for the event's success were congratulatory words from Harpenden Town Council: *'Thank you for another fantastic Seniors Fair, congratulations to you and your team on the organisation of such a successful event. We really enjoyed meeting many people and, as always, it was a superb opportunity to listen to views, ideas and answer questions. We look forward to seeing you again next year!'*



Ron's Spring Retail Round-Up

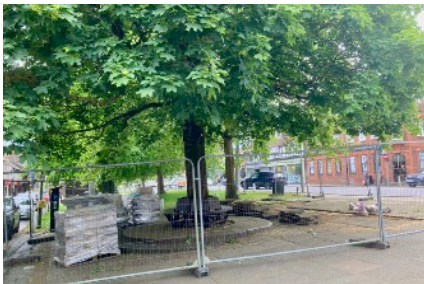
National praise in the Express for the Harpenden High Street as one of the top retail towns in the UK. Thanks to the range of independents in a beautiful setting. Several recent changes though could see some new 'faces' in town.



Above L2R: Molasses House will be relocating to London after 7 years in Harpenden. B J Copestick will be closing in the Summer after a 'Retirement' Sale. Lovewed's Jewellers have relocated to a larger premises in central St Albans.



Above L2R: The Bakery Stop opening replaces The Pudding Stop. The Perch in Station Road is Harpenden's Cocktail Bar. The Sense Garden adjacent to Bowers Parade, a beautifully quiet location for all to enjoy. MAIN Hair Gallery has closed.



Above L2R: The Concourse is being repaired in May. Work to repair the Cross Keys has yet to be approved the Historic body governing ancient buildings. Work has started on the Bank Hub which should mean a Summer opening.



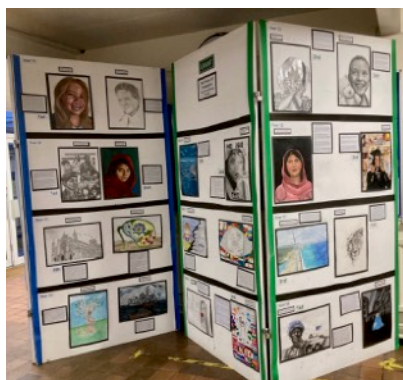
**Shop Local
all year round in
Southdown and the
Harpenden
High Street**



Prize presentations to the winners of the Arts Competition to celebrate 80 years of the United Nations

UNA (United Nations Association) Harpenden in conjunction with the Harpenden Society held an arts competition for senior school students in Harpenden during late 2025. The purpose being for students to express their views on what they want the future of the UN to look like.

Entries could be in the form of art, photography, videos, music, creative writing, craft work or any other work of a creative and original nature. 56 Art entries and one written entry were submitted by students



from St George's School and The Kings School. An extensive display of the student's art with their statements of justification for the imagery were seen at St George's School on January 19th by the three judges. Barrie Woolston, owner Molasses House gallery, Suheil Shahryar, Chair of UNA Harpenden and Ron Taylor, the Harpenden Society.

The written composition was judged by local author and historian Amanda Thomas.

PRIZE PRESENTATIONS

Prizes of gift tokens from Harpenden Books were awarded to the winners in the two age groups.

(Years 8 -10 and Years 11-13)

A Certificate and gift token in recognition of their work was also awarded to every student who entered.

St.George's School Chapel on March 11th

With a gathering of around 100 students, teachers and parents the six winners were presented on stage with their gift tokens and certificates. Later the remaining students were presented with their Certificates and gift tokens.

The Kings School on March 12th

The winner of the written work, Gabriel Sackey was presented with his gift token and certificate and Daniella Siyambola with her gift token and certificate.



L2R. Amanda Thomas presenting Gabriel Sackey and Daniella Siyambola with their certificates. Headteacher Andy Reeves.



L2R. Ron Taylor presenting Gabriel Sackey and Daniella Siyambola with their gift tokens. Amanda Thomas

Please send comments on articles or any other issues raised in this edition to the Newsletter producer Ron Taylor. publicity@harpendsociety.org.uk

Visit the Society's website – www.harpendsociety.org
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