



# NEWSLETTER

## *Summer 2010*

In this newsletter we are able to report on a variety of activities by our members. The AGM took place in April and we have enjoyed two very different talks at our monthly meetings.

Our outing to Ipswich went extremely well, with splendid weather despite the forecast! Those of us who had not visited the town before were pleasantly surprised to see not only how many old buildings have survived, but also that many interesting new developments had taken place, supported by the dedicated activity of the Ipswich Society over many years. It will be interesting to see how the town rises to the challenge of the present economic circumstances.

Returning to our own Society, members are reminded that instead of a Garden Party this year, we have the opportunity of a guided tour of Haileybury College, followed by a supper, in July - for details see p2. Numbers must be booked in advance, so please contact Jill Eames as soon as possible to secure a place.

Although decisions have now been made on Hertford's supermarkets, there are still some big planning issues to consider, with the Core Strategy within the Local Development Framework and the Urban Transport Plan both up for consultation. And an urgent environmental issue concerns the state of the River Beane and the effects of over-abstraction of water. All these issues are dealt with in detail in the following pages.

With best wishes to all our members for an enjoyable summer holiday!



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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM took place on Wednesday April 7<sup>th</sup> at 8.00pm in the Hall of the Church of the Immaculate Conception and St Joseph, St John's Street, Hertford, and was attended by approximately forty members. The Chairman's and Treasurer's Reports (presented in the Spring 2010 Newsletter) were discussed and agreed.

It was also agreed that Linda Haysey will continue as Chairman and Terry Betts as Treasurer and the Committee will be as listed in the Contacts boxes on p6-7. Jean Riddell will continue as Membership Secretary but no longer wishes to be on the Committee. Linda Haysey thanked her for her hard work over many years and presented her with a bouquet.

## 2010 PROGRAMME

On July 14<sup>th</sup> Toby Parker, Haileybury's Honorary Archivist, will lead a tour of the College, to be

followed by supper; cost £16.

On September 15<sup>th</sup> Nina Villa, Town Clerk, will provide an update on ideas for a Town Plan for Hertford.

On November 10<sup>th</sup> the Civic Society Awards for 2010 will be presented at a party.

## PLANNING MATTERS

There are no planning applications of significance to report on in this edition of the Newsletter; a number have been examined, but there have been no grounds for objection or comment. However, there is a major piece of work that the Society will have to undertake over the summer months; the Issues and Options stage of the Core Strategy within the Local Development Framework (LDF) is now posted in draft form on the East Herts Council website. To remind members, the LDF is being prepared to replace the current Local Plan and the Core Strategy is, as its name suggests, the centrepiece to which all

the other policy documents covering the various areas within local planning relate. The arrangements for public consultation on this stage of developing the Core Strategy are due to be signed off by the Council towards the end of June, so that the formal three-month period can commence in July. The Planning Group will consider and comment on the contents in detail, but we would welcome input from Society members, who may well be better informed in some aspects. To obtain access to the consultation document go to

[www.eastherts.gov.uk/LDF](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/LDF).

In the mean time we expect to set up a briefing from the planning officer in charge of developing the LDF. Any members interested in attending should contact me on [andrewsangster@onetel.com](mailto:andrewsangster@onetel.com).

Andrew Sangster

## HERTFORD THEATRE

A major redevelopment at Castle Hall is about to begin. Significant capital investment from East Herts District Council will bring a new studio area, a new café and

foyer, a gallery and a redesigned River Room to the building. An important feature will be high-quality cinema facilities. The Arts Programme will also be redesigned to bring a wider Arts offer into the town. The new façade, entrance hall and landscaping will make the exterior more attractive in this key part of Hertford. It is hoped that water power from the river will be harnessed to generate electricity.

The new building will reopen in November as Hertford Theatre, with an ambitious pantomime, Cinderella.

Linda Haysey

## WORLD WILDLIFE FUND AND THE RIVER BEANE

Members of the River Beane Restoration Association (RBRA) recently attended a conference on 29<sup>th</sup> April at Tewinbury Mill Hotel, held by the World Wild Life Fund (WWF), entitled "Rivers on the Edge" with a particular focus on the River Beane and the Mimram.

The RBRA has been trying for 20 years to get action to reduce the overabstraction to supply Stevenage, which has devastated the River Beane and its rare chalk stream

ecology. However, despite several serious attempts by the water company Veolia and the Environment Agency, nothing has been done over that period. The Water Company has abstracted less than they are allowed under the licence, but even this reduced amount is too much for the environment to bear, especially in dry periods.

Chalk streams are rare and unique ecosystems supporting endangered species and England has 90% of Europe's and the world's such environments. The WWF has carried out a comprehensive study of these rivers and produced an authoritative report on the situation.

Some chalk rivers such as the Itchen and Kennet have been designated as of "national importance" and action has been taken to improve them. However, the WWF describes the Beane and Mimram as "Cinderella Rivers" because, although their destruction has long been acknowledged by the authorities, the investment required to bring water from other sources to supply Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City has not been made.

The WWF report spells out how 2009 was supposed to be a year of opportunity for English rivers as OFWAT, the

Environment Agency and the water companies were supposed to respond to the EU Water Framework Directive which requires all rivers and lakes to reach "good ecological status" by 2015. The responses to this directive have completely failed the Beane and Mimram:-

- The Upper Lee Catchment, including the Beane and Mimram, was officially recognised by the Environment Agency in 2006 as over-licensed. This means that the licensed abstraction is unsustainably high.
- There are no firm plans to reduce abstraction by 2015, the official target date.
- Water consumption reduction targets will do little to reduce abstraction in the face of climate change and further development in the region.
- There are hopelessly inadequate supplies of water for the planned 25,000 new homes in the catchment areas. The RBRA has objected to the East of England housing expansion plans for this reason.
- Veolia put forward plans to reduce leakage and install water meters but

OFWAT rejected 81% of this investment on the grounds that as actual abstraction is under the maximum *licensed* abstraction there is no shortage! They seem not to recognise the Environment Agency assessment of the rivers being *over*-licensed.

- With that kind of Alice in Wonderland thinking, we can only hope that the pressure brought by the WWF and the Early Day Motion to improve our rivers by Oliver Heald MP (already signed by 100 MPs) will result in authorisation of the investment by Veolia necessary to allow these important small rivers to regenerate.
- The WWF have likened our treatment of these rare, internationally important chalk streams as our rain forest or our melting polar ice cap.

Barrie Goldsmith

## ANNUAL OUTING

Our annual outing this year was to Ipswich.

Our hosts for the morning were the Ipswich Society, who had made the arrangements and met us on arrival in the persons of Caroline Markham their Secretary and John Vane

their vice- chairman. They escorted us to the waterfront where we had coffee at Isaacs: Isaac Lord's Merchant House, a beautifully restored building, parts of which date back to the Middle Ages. The view across the wide quay to the Orwell, the deep especially dredged Wet Dock and its marina, in the sunshine, was lovely.

John Vane led the walking tour which began in Isaacs itself, upstairs in the Granary. This is now in working order, lovingly restored by John Jackamon, a great enthusiast, who was there to demonstrate the machinery. From there we walked along the waterfront, past the Customs House, an impressive 19th century building, and past various developments finished and unfinished (because of the recession and slow housing market). No building is allowed to have residential units on the ground floor because of the level of floods predicted for the coming decades. To help with this situation, and following an inspired decision, the University of Suffolk was built on the waterfront so that the student population provides needed clientele for the lively cafes and bars. Crossing the busy ring road we walked into town through

attractive streets lined with period buildings including the house where Cardinal Wolsey was born; later in the tour we saw a lone gateway of Tudor brickwork, all that remains of Wolsey's plans to build a great college that would have rivalled Eton. He fell from power in 1530 and work ceased.

The town is large, busy and thriving... and has 600 listed buildings. There are mediaeval churches of note with tall towers and fine flintwork. One house in particular is notable; now called the Ancient House it is pargetted and has Ipswich windows, a particular style of bow window, and inside, fine plaster ceilings; Lakeland Plastics are at present the occupiers.

The afternoon was our own for exploration. Many of us retraced our steps to see at leisure the old streets and as a contrast a building of our own time, Norman Foster's Willis building with its black glass walls and interesting reflections. Many also visited Christchurch Mansion, which sits in its own Park. This Tudor Mansion houses notable paintings and furniture in room settings as well as other collections.

Ipswich is an ancient town which has always thrived,

suited its commerce to the age; this it continues to do. It was full of surprises for those of us for whom this was a first visit; the day was both enjoyable and interesting and we are grateful to The Ipswich Society for their hospitality, which we hope to be able to return next year.

Jill Eames

*More information on Ipswich is available at*

[www.ipswichsociety.org.uk](http://www.ipswichsociety.org.uk)  
and [www.visit-ipswich.com](http://www.visit-ipswich.com)

## TALKS TO MEMBERS

We heard talks on two contrasting subjects earlier this year - one focusing down on the materials of which Hertford was constructed in the past and the other putting our own local experience into a world-wide context and looking to the future.

## THE STONES OF HERTFORD

After the AGM came John Harris' well-illustrated talk concerned with the natural stones used in the buildings and paving around the centre of Hertford.

The tour by slide show started outside Hertford Museum, where John showed granite kerbstones from Devon and

Cornwall with feldspar crystals, quartz, mica and black veins of tourmaline. Certain shop fronts in Maidenhead Street display panels of Larvikite from Norway - popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - at Martins, Clintons, Stead and Simpson, Ashleys' and the former Woolworths, some dark, some light.

At Mill Bridge there is Portland Stone, an oolitic limestone from Dorset, where weathering has revealed oyster shell fossils. A tablet on the wall of the library is of limestone from Derbyshire. Here can be seen crinoid fossils, while the nearby St Mary's fragment is of Merstham stone. At Hartham Lane there are more granite kerbstones from Cornwall and the Mount Sorrel pinks from Leicestershire. Under an archway near the former Old Cross Post Office setts of these again occur, together with grey Aberdeen granite with dark patches of xenoliths.

John speculated upon how these stones from far-flung creations could have been transported before the motor age and, indeed, before the

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wagon?

At Weir Cottage the famous Hertfordshire puddingstone - flint pebbles bedded into a silica solution - can be seen, as at the postern gateway in the Castle grounds, where cornerstones of limestone and clunch - hard chalk - are to be found. John also reminded us that the new "Andrews' Room" at the Museum has outside doorways decorated with sections of puddingstone. Other boulders in the Castle grounds are: the Synod Stone - fine-grained S.W. England granite, the "Ware 1901" presentation - a glacial erratic carried from Norway during the last Ice Age, and the Boundary Stone - a coarse sandstone from Wiltshire, similar to that at Avebury.

Next, to All Saints. The rebuilding was completed, except for the Tower, in 1895 and is of Runcorn Stone - a New Red Sandstone - in which the bedding lines can be seen. Millwrights' headstones of Scottish granite and the Pearson Memorial made from Leinster granite with white mica are in the churchyard. Inside the church are the reredos of alabaster - a hard gypsum - presented by W.F. Andrews in 1914, and the font, of carboniferous limestone.

Parliament Square's War Memorial is built of Portland Stone and the Corn Exchange probably of Clipsham Stone. This was also used by the Romans and was found north of the county of Hertford near Ermine Street, which probably made for easier transport. The Shire Hall has dressings of Portland Stone and nearby, in Market Place, the new setts are a puzzle, Portuguese setts, black basalt, Mount Sorrel - could they be off-cuts from a stonemason's yard? The York paving stones are thought to be artificially weathered.

There was also a table displaying handling specimens of Larvikite, puddingstone, basalt, new red limestone, oolitic limestone, and granite showing tourmaline veins.

Congratulations to John for a very worthwhile evening.

Jean Riddell

## TRANSITION TOWNS

Learning to live differently with an alternative concept of what we mean by 'riches' is the challenge thrown down to all of us by the Transition Town Movement. What will we do for energy and raw

## SERVING OUR MEMBERS

materials as the Earth's natural resources run out?

Sandra White, Dr Viv Jones (Department of Geography, University College, London) and Dr Ben Crystall (technology features editor, New Scientist) brought a local perspective to a global issue at the Society's meeting on March 10<sup>th</sup>.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a vast data-gathering exercise carried out for the United Nations, shows that we have changed the Earth's ecosystem more rapidly over the last fifty years than at any other time in history. This has brought great wealth to some, especially to people in the West, but at a net cost to the environment and by impoverishing people in other parts of the world. (See [www.millenniumassessment.org/](http://www.millenniumassessment.org/))

Dr Crystall provided a case study of the use of oil, one of our most essential resources, not only for fuel, but for all kinds of materials, from fertilisers to plastics to paints. Each barrel of oil (about a bath-tub in size) is packed with about six gigajoules of energy, or the equivalent of five labourers working for a year. On average, each Hertfordshire

resident uses about ten barrels a year, mostly in the form of fuel.



The global demand for oil currently runs at 85 million barrels a day, and rising. Discovery of new oilfields peaked in the 1950s-60s, but they are now running out. New fields are still being discovered, but they are smaller or more difficult to exploit. Of the three discovered over the last year, in Brazil, Oman and Iran, the largest would supply the world for about three weeks and the others would run out in a morning.



We are rapidly approaching 'peak oil'. The Shell oil company estimates that after 2015 supplies of easy to access oil will no longer keep pace with demand. We could continue to get oil from deep under the sea or from tar sands, but this would push the cost of production up from about \$20 a barrel to \$100, would require us to put almost as much energy into the process as we would get out and would create more pollution.

And what applies to oil also applies to the minerals we mine. So how can we learn to live with ever-diminishing resources? Can we still feel

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well off while reducing our levels of consumption?

Costa Rica holds a clue.

According to the Happy Planet Index, it is the happiest place on earth because it has an equitable society, a good work/life balance, high use of renewable energy, strong political participation, is reversing deforestation and is able to free up financial resources because it has had no army since 1949. Its people have a lower carbon footprint and a longer life expectancy than those of the USA.

The method by which these conclusions are drawn is controversial because it is not all quantifiable and is also based on surveys that may not be comparable from country to country, but this interesting concept is discussed at

[www.happyplanetindex.org](http://www.happyplanetindex.org).

The Transition Towns movement works to bring communities together to find ways in which we can still live well but use fewer resources. There are no simple answers, but the solutions will involve co-operation and bringing decision-making closer to the community. So far, over 270 communities across the world have declared themselves Transition Towns, including 130 in the UK.

Sandra White described some of the strategies and community projects tried so far. These include:

- Growing food together through allotments and garden sharing
- Bringing generations together to share skills in making, repairing and recycling instead of buying new goods
- Promoting community energy schemes, such as shared solar panels
- Keeping money circulating in local communities by creating a local currency, as in Lewes and Totnes
- Car sharing schemes
- Tools and equipment lending schemes amongst neighbours
- Developing Energy Plans with local authorities and the key players in the local economy.

The aim is to develop an alternative concept of 'riches' - through enjoying using different goods, taking up different activities and developing different relationships, we should learn to be happier with less.

Sue Jones

*More information is available at*

[www.transitionnetwork.org/](http://www.transitionnetwork.org/)

## HERTFORD-WARE URBAN TRANSPORT PLAN

Society members living within the town's boundaries should have received a copy of the public consultation document on the emerging Hertford and Ware Urban Transport Plan, and some will have taken the opportunity to respond during March and April to the potential schemes listed. Several members have attended the stakeholders' meetings during last winter and were involved in the development of the Plan. A small working group then prepared, on behalf of the Committee, the Society's comments on the consultation. Before addressing the two options for the Bengoe rat run we consulted the Lower Bengoe Residents Association. The content of the letter we submitted follows:

Thank you for sending us a copy of the consultation document on this transport plan. We are pleased that an overall assessment of local needs is being undertaken, because improvements are needed, and we appreciate that your vision is to make transport healthier and more sustainable. This means

less emphasis on the motor car and more on walking, cycling and public transport. Before responding to the questions in the consultation document we offer the following general points:

i. We have examined the details in the public consultation document and the document on your website and found it to have long lists of possible schemes, but the details and benefits of each are not clearly explained. It is possible that a programme of many smaller schemes might be of greater total benefit than a few large schemes.

ii. We find it curious that an urban transport plan offers many potential schemes involving new construction and control improvements, but fails to consider whether an increasing level of public transport should be provided. Nor is there any reference to taxi services and the means of accommodating them. In these respects we think the Plan is incomplete.

iii. Some of us have been part of the consultation process and we noted that the number of people involved has decreased as the process has proceeded, with a noticeable absence of

younger people. In our view this lack of public involvement has weakened the process of developing the Plan

iv. Many of the first 14 questions posed in the consultation are so general as to be universally desirable but others are less clear, for example number 7. Furthermore, potential schemes 9, 10 and 11 are specific examples of the measures referred to in the question in 8.

v. Where capital expenditure is planned, budgets for necessary maintenance should be identified not only to help in assessing benefit, but also to check whether the required level of funding will be available.

vi. An essential part of any transport plan should be monitoring and reviewing the outcomes of any changes made or the results of any new facilities provided. This should involve public consultation.

Our comments on the questions posed in the consultation are as follows and relate mostly to Hertford:

**1. Joined-up walking and cycling network - Fully support.** To reduce vehicular traffic we have to get more people to travel on foot or by bicycle. If people were to feel safer on bicycles they would be more likely to use them; a joined-up cycling network would contribute to this feeling.

**2. Increased pedestrian crossing facilities - Fully support.** We have campaigned for some time for additional crossings on, for example, London Road. This would provide safer walking access for children from the Foxholes estate to Simon Balle School.

**3. More bus lanes and increased bus priority - Fully support.** Buses get held up in Ware Road, Fore Street and St Andrew Street. We are particularly concerned about what happens at present in the narrow part of Fore Street. There are frequently delays to buses because passage is blocked by other vehicles; there is intimidation of cyclists because drivers do not realise that they are allowed to ride in both directions, and in order to pass vehicles mount the pavement threatening the safety of pedestrians and damaging the kerbs and pavements. In short this is a scheme implemented by

Highways which does not work and should be reviewed. The options would include making this stretch of Fore Street available for buses and cycles only, making all buses exit the town-centre by the Bluecoats roundabout or putting traffic lights at the western end which would automatically turn red when a bus approaches from the east.

**4. Better waiting areas at Hertford Bus Station - Fully support.** More covered waiting space is needed at the bus station as well as a larger waiting room. We have campaigned in the past for a canopy abutting the shopping centre wall. This would make bus travel to and from the town-centre significantly more attractive.

**5. Better on-street bus stops with real-time information - Fully support.** More covered bus stops with detailed and accurate information screens are needed. At present information drops off the screen when the bus is due rather than when it has passed! This is another measure that would make bus travel more attractive.

**6. A Park and Ride system serving both towns - Fully oppose.** We believe that park and ride facilities work best for larger towns drawing

people from surrounding areas whereas most shoppers in Hertford and Ware come from within the towns. In theory commuters to the towns could use such a facility but a site between Ware and Hertford would invite people to drive through or near to one of the towns and so would not substantially reduce the amount of traffic.

**7. Better rail station access - Partly support.** We are not sure what better station access means: by foot, by car, through the doors or what? Hertford East has fewer bus services than Hertford North but we believe that fewer commuters and travellers use that station. There is no discussion of taxi facilities at either station; Hertford North often has no taxis available. There is scope for a more imaginative system of cheaper 'shared taxis'.

**8. Do you support the additional measures to tackle congestion? - No view.** We have given this response because all four potential solutions listed in your document appear as separate questions. We have already noted that we see no benefit in a park and ride scheme, but agree with reviewing car parking provision.

**9. Intelligent systems to improve traffic flow - No view.** We doubt if it is possible to reconfigure the control system at Old Cross beyond what is already installed in order to accommodate more vehicles. In our view that was the conclusion drawn at the Sainsbury public inquiry. Other junctions, for example at the Hale Road and Cross Road roundabouts, work well at present (although not for cyclists). The introduction of traffic lights is likely to reduce the throughput of traffic.

**10. Message signs to alert drivers to congestion and car parking spaces - Partly oppose.** We question whether signs would be of much assistance. There is the risk that they would be unsightly, unnecessary, and expensive and would not be maintained. The current aim should be to reduce the amount of signage clutter.

**11. Changes to loading restrictions in the town centres - Partly oppose.** This may be desirable for large supermarkets but less practicable for smaller shops who are dependent on smaller deliveries that are beyond their control. There is a need to support small shops in the present difficult trading

circumstances so no further restrictions should be imposed upon them at this time.

**12. Review of town centre car parking to discourage long stay parking - Fully support.** In Hertford, St Andrew Street car park is the only one that tends to fill up and should be exclusively short stay. We believe that the Gascoyne Way car park has enough capacity for a proportion of its spaces to be for long stay. Hartham similarly has enough capacity except for occasions such as Saturday mornings when a lot of children's football is played and when the gym/pool are crowded. We fully support the idea of a review so that each car park is matched to the type and volume of demand and favours the retail sector. We have for many years, along with retailers and users of the town centre, sought the adoption of 'pay on exit' to replace 'pay and display', but this change has been resisted by the District Council.

**13. Measures to reduce rat-running in specific residential areas and reduce speeds - Fully support.** What measures are being proposed? We favour tables, pads and 20 mph zones above chicanes, pinches and humps. Cyclists are differentially affected by

different designs and where cycle 'by-passes' are provided they are rarely kept clear of stones and glass. We believe that there are different solutions for each problem so a generalised response is difficult.

**14. Do you support the proposals to improve access to Mead Lane? - Fully support.** We favour plans for improving road access to Mead Lane and making better use of the land adjacent to the East railway station. Given that a second independent access is not realistically available, we support the proposal as the best option and recognise that it will improve safety in the area as well as public transport access and car parking.

**15. Bengeo options.** We question the way the options for the Bengeo rat run have been presented in the consultation questionnaire. It is quite possible that a large number of responders who do not suffer from the problems of the rat run, but would be inconvenienced by the closure of Byde Street, will vote against the suggested trial. In these circumstances how will it be decided whether to proceed with the trial? No indication is given of the process to be adopted. It

would appear from the question that the principle of conducting a trial has already been accepted. This is a long-running problem that will continue and possibly get worse when Sainsbury opens its new store. This Plan presents the opportunity to address the problem so we favour the conducting of trials to find a solution or solutions, but with the following provisos:

- \* Any trial should last at least a year in order to give motorists time to modify their behaviour by using alternative routes.
- \* A trial closure of Byde Street should start before Sainsbury opens its new store and continue for at least six months afterwards.
- \* Data should be collected both in the Byde Street area and in St Andrew Street and Old Cross to identify the benefits and penalties associated with any trials. This should then form the basis of further public consultation.
- \* It should be clearly understood that if any trial results in unacceptable increases in traffic in the town centre the solution trialled will not be made permanent.

Andrew Sangster

## PART A - MEMBERSHIP FORM

I/We wish to become/continue as members of the Hertford Civic Society and

(a) enclose a cheque in the sum of £  being my/our subscription for 2010

(b) wish to pay by standing order and enclose my completed standing order form

(delete as appropriate)

FULL NAME (S)

CLASS OF MEMBERSHIP FULL  PENSIONER  JUNIOR  CORPORATE

ADDRESS  
(including postcode)

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

To renew your membership, please complete and send this form to:

Jean Riddell  
Membership Secretary  
30 Riversmeat  
Hertford  
SG14 1LE

Subscriptions are as follows:

### Full membership

£9.00 per annum

### Joint full membership at the same address

£14.00 per annum

### Full membership with concessions

£5.00 per annum

### Joint membership with concessions at the same address

£8.00 per annum

### Joint membership (one full and one concession) at the same address

£11.00 per annum

### Corporate membership

£20.00 per annum

### Junior membership (under 18 years of age)

£5.00 per annum

## DECLARATION

NAME OF CHARITY Hertford Civic Society

I wish the above named charity to treat as a Gift Aid donation all subscriptions I have paid since 6 April 2000 (if applicable) and all subsequent donations until further notice.

FULL NAME

ADDRESS  
(including postcode)

SIGNED

## STANDING ORDER FORM

NAME OF YOUR BANK

BANK ADDRESS

SORT CODE

ACCOUNT NO

pay to the account of:

Hertford Civic Society at Barclays Bank, 12 Market Street, Hertford SG14 1BA; sort code 20-20-37; account no 40475807 on receipt of this order and on each 1 January thereafter, the sum of £

FULL NAME

ADDRESS  
(including postcode)

SIGNED

DATED