



# NEWSLETTER

## *Winter 2016-17*

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Newsletter, and a Happy New Year to all our members and readers.

We have a full and varied programme for 2017 covering a wide range of local and national issues as well as a visit and a social event, so get your diaries out now and please remember that some of these events require prior booking. As ever, we are grateful to Malcolm Ramsay for all his hard work in putting this programme together.

As we look back over the past year, we are also grateful to those members of the Society and the local community who supported Richard Threlfall in forming a committee to make the Civic Society Awards for high quality additions to the built environment since 2011, and to those who have supported Andrew Sangster in his work with the Town Council and the Hertford and Ware History Society to create a Heritage Trail around Hertford. Other members have been involved in the process of Neighbourhood Planning, as described by Terry Betts, while yet others have continued their involvement with local groups covering many issues, such as the environment and traffic. Peter Norman has continued to monitor planning applications and the Committee has responded to on-going developments, such as the District Plan and proposals for the re-development of Bircherley Green. If you know of anyone who would be interested in supporting us on such issues, the New Year is a good time to encourage them to join Hertford Civic Society!

### **2017 Subscriptions were due on 1<sup>st</sup> January**

You will find the rates on the enclosed Membership Form. The majority of members pay by Standing Order. If you are not amongst these it would help us if you were to fill in the Standing Order section of the form and send it to the Membership Secretary at 11 Norman Avenue, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 4HL. If you do wish to continue paying by cash or cheque please send your subscription immediately to the same address.

Each year we reclaim a considerable sum in Gift Aid. If you are unsure whether you have already authorised this for your subscription please fill in this section of the form.

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## PROGRAMME 2017

*The Civic Movement in future: how can it help Hertford?*  
Lecture, 15 February 2017

Joan Humble, who is the recently elected Chairman of Civic Voice (the central point for all Civic Societies), will give her views on how we in Hertford Civic Society can help our town. These will not be the views of an armchair theorist, but of someone who also chairs Blackpool Civic Trust, as well as leading Civic Voice. She should be as well placed as anyone both to inspire us and to provoke discussion.

*Panshanger Park: what's next?*  
Lecture, 15 March 2017

Kate Harwood and Gary O'Leary will be focusing on how Panshanger might finally emerge as a public park rather than the gravel excavation site that it has so long been. They will address the new issues that may stem from fuller public access, and consider how the park might work best in future, for everyone. Kate Harwood is Planning and Conservation Officer for Hertfordshire Gardens Trust; some of you may remember that she talked to us about Panshanger from a more historical/design perspective in 2014. She is currently involved with the Hertingfordbury and Sele Ward Neighbourhood Plans, which interface with Panshanger Park. Gary O'Leary is Chairman of Hertingfordbury Parish Council, and is hugely involved in its Neighbourhood Plan. Both are highly active in the 'Friends of Panshanger Park', so they are very well placed bring us up to date on developments there and to lead a discussion.

*What is the future for Hertfordshire's countryside?*  
Brief AGM followed by lecture, 26 April 2017

Kevin FitzGerald is Honorary Director of CPRE Hertfordshire: CPRE stands for Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England. As he lamented, our countryside, in particular the allegedly 'protected' Green Belt, is under threat again. What then can we do about it? In helping us to think through this question, Kevin will be able to draw on perspectives broader than our own: what's happening elsewhere in the County, and what's happening across England?

*Visit to Stour Valley: Harwich, Dedham and Dedham Vale Winery*  
17 May 2017

This coach trip focuses on different aspects of the Stour Valley:

First, in the morning, we will be visiting historic, maritime Harwich, which is at the rivermouth.

Then we will head a short way upstream to Dedham, "easily the most attractive small town in Essex" (Pevsner), where

the artist John Constable lived and painted. We will have time for lunch and a chance to see one of the finest East Anglian churches.

Finally, on our way back, we will be calling in at Dedham Vale Winery, a lovely place for a tea break even if you are completely uninterested in one of the oldest English vineyards and its bottles of wine (hard to resist?).

Our visit to Harwich, to the old part of the town, which is quite separate from the modern ferry port, will be hosted by the Harwich Society. As at Rochester, we may well be greeted on arrival by the Town Crier. Harwich does not have the ships moored as at Chatham, but it is a very historic harbour with which Pepys and Nelson are both associated. We will have a guided tour laid on by Harwich Society, to show us some of the highlights, such as a late C17<sup>th</sup> crane operated by a treadmill (we will actually go inside the crane), which is a unique survivor. Also equally extraordinary is the Electric Palace, an original 1911 cinema; again, we will get to see inside it.

Anyone who does not want to join the 80 or 90 minute walking tour could instead visit the Redoubt, a substantial Napoleonic era fort complete with some of its guns, restored by the Harwich Society and now run by them as a museum. It is apparently the largest ancient monument in this country to have been restored by voluntary efforts.

Dedham, where we head off to for a relaxed lunch break, has plenty of quaint and delightful places to eat. Or, alternatively, you could bring a picnic and it is then easy to walk up on to a hill just outside the 'town' (think of it more as a village), and experience the kind of vista familiar to Constable. The church, however, is something of a cathedral, 170 feet long, soaring upwards, and all of a piece. As Pevsner explains, it is a wool church of the C15<sup>th</sup>, really more like one of the finest Suffolk churches than an Essex church.

The final event of the day is the tea break at Dedham Vale Winery. This lovely and unexpected place sits above a small lake and extensive rolling vineyards. You could ignore the wine in favour of tea, though there will be opportunities for those who are interested to have a tasting of some of the produce, at reasonably modest prices.

The cost this year works out at £25. That includes the coach and the walking tour of Harwich (or alternatively the cost of entry to the Redoubt if you opt for that). And we will of course travel in great comfort. Tickets will be available from Peter and Susan Brown's shop from soon after Easter or, more immediately, from Malcolm Ramsay, whose contact details are given elsewhere in this newsletter (see p8).

As ever, we leave Hertford in our coach from alongside Hertford East or Tesco at 8.45am.

### *Summer party*

Sunday 25 June 2017: at 12 noon

We are grateful to Marlene Bennett and Peter Creasey of 154 North Road, who live on the banks of the River Beane in a very beautiful rural setting, complete with an island and a view out over water meadows. It has to be seen to be believed. And there are trees offering shade, as well as open spaces. Further details will be circulated later.

*'Blue plaques trail' around central Hertford*  
2 August 2017, starting at 7.00pm, Salisbury Square

Hertford Civic Society has long been promoting the idea of putting heritage plaques on the more famous or architecturally exciting buildings in central Hertford. Which distinguished residents lived where, and when? Following assiduous activity by Andrew Sangster over more years than he cares to remember, Hertford Town Council and Hertford Civic Society have now formed a partnership to press ahead with the installation of around 40 blue plaques. Early in 2017, these plaques will actually be installed, while a leaflet listing them and their locations will be published. Their wording has been carefully composed by Jean Riddell and other local historians. It has been a complex process, involving not only the Town Council and Civic Society but also volunteers who have acted as intermediaries between those two bodies and the owners of the 40 buildings. To conclude and celebrate the whole enterprise, there will be a guided walk specifically for members of Hertford Civic Society, with help from Jean Riddell and others.

The arrangements for this event are necessarily different from our normal ones. The tour will

start at 7.00 pm, and will last for around 80 or 90 minutes. We will meet near the fountain in Salisbury Square. There is no fee for Civic Society members (non-members, if numbers permit, £4), but anyone who registers and does not turn up would be denying someone else the opportunity to take part, as numbers are limited to 25, and no repeat event is planned. You can contact Malcolm by email, by phone (no ansafone) or by post; his contact details are given elsewhere in this Newsletter (see page 8). Guides will include Jean Riddell.

### *McMullens: your family, your brewery and your beers*

Lecture, 15 November 2017

Fergus McMullen, Production & Sales Director, and sixth generation family brewer, has very kindly agreed to talk to us about his great passions: his family, the independent brewing company (there are not many of these left, of much age and size) and his beers.

This should be a delightful event, with many different aspects, and there will certainly be time for discussion of such topics as pubs and the way we drink now. It will be fun, your talks organiser can assure you, having heard Fergus McMullen run similar events a couple of times in recent years.

### *Times and venues*

Lectures, as ever, are on Wednesdays, and start at 8.00pm, with refreshments from around 7.45pm. They continue to be in the hall of the Roman Catholic church in St John's Street. Other events take place in the stated locations, on the days/times mentioned above.

While this programme is mainly in the early and middle part of 2017, it will be possible to add another event later in the year, if there is a need to hear about and discuss anything else of particular importance to us. In that case, to inform members, we use email (for those whose addresses we know) and flyers in the library and other such places.

Malcolm Ramsay

## PLANNING MATTERS

### *Gates Garage*

The last Newsletter reported our comments on McCarthy & Stone's proposal to demolish the Gates car showroom on Gascoyne Way and build 33 'retirement living' apartments. We objected to the lack of any provision for affordable dwellings, either on- or off-site, said the proposed building would be over-bearing when seen in relation to the historic houses in West Street, and queried the small number of parking spaces proposed (26). The application was refused for those reasons and because the site would be lost for employment use.

### *Elburt Wurlings*

The owners of this vacant building intend to replace it with a new block comprising 14 apartments, a licensed café and basement parking. We had objected to the 'licensed café' (which could in practice become any kind of drinking establishment, restaurant or café) because it would be in the heart of what is becoming a quiet residential area, with Bentley House, the new Sovereign House and possibly the site of Gates to be occupied by elderly residents. We had argued that the car parking proposed (one space per flat, with no visitor spaces) would be inadequate, and had also urged that the building should be no higher than the redeveloped Sovereign House.

Nevertheless the Council's Development Management Committee decided to approve the application. Members accepted officers' advice that the café would be a desirable feature as it retains employment use on the site as well as adding interest to the street scene. The permission includes restrictions on opening hours but nothing to ensure that it remains simply a 'licensed café'. The officers' report agreed that the limited amount of parking proposed told against the proposal but they advised Members that any parking problems would be outweighed by the advantages of the scheme. Let us hope they're right.

### *69 Queens Road*

This property lies next to the public footpath which connects Queens Road and Mangrove Road. The owners applied to rebuild a garden storage building as a residential annex. The site is in the Green Belt and a Green Finger. We

submitted an objection, saying that the new building would look like a small modern bungalow or cottage within or on the edge of a paddock, set well apart from any other residential building; as such the integrity of the Green Finger would be compromised. There was some doubt about whether the building is on land which is lawfully part of the existing garden, and the application was withdrawn. A further application was then submitted, for a certificate that use of the land as residential garden (rather than for agriculture) is lawful. Such applications are determined purely on factual grounds - in this case the applicants had to prove, on the balance of probability, that the land had been used as part of the garden for at least ten years. In the face of contrary evidence from neighbours they were unable to do so and a certificate was refused. This will make it more difficult to secure permission for any development on the land.

### *31 Chambers Street*

This was a proposal for a new building comprising nine flats. Despite the Chambers Street address, its primary elevation would have been to Port Hill, where it would have been prominent in the street scene. We submitted an objection pointing out that, as seen from Port Hill, the new building would be to the same eaves-height as its mid-nineteenth century neighbour, but would have three storeys rather than two; this would have resulted in an uneasy and contrived relationship between the buildings which did nothing to preserve or enhance the appearance of this part of the conservation area. Moreover, only 5 parking spaces were to be provided for the 9 flats. The application was refused on design and parking grounds.

### *306 Ware Road*

This site east of Cockbush Avenue has been vacant for some years. An application was made for 65 apartments in three blocks. We considered that this would have been an over-development of the site, and in summary our letter of objection pointed out that the car parking proposed was all on the surface, which meant that it would occupy almost all the site not built on; therefore there would be little or no amenity space and the outlook from almost all the flats would be over car parks. Further, the 4-storey block furthest from Ware Road would have been only about 15 metres from the

foot of the 12 metre high chalk cliff which separates the land from the Pinehurst estate. The application was withdrawn.

### *Retirement Community*

Following an earlier refusal, a revised application is on the table for a retirement community on the former brickfield land west of the railway viaduct beyond the Hertford Town FC ground. This time an additional access is proposed, from Mimram Road. Although details of the proposed buildings and of the access to the site have changed, the application is essentially for the same development as that previously refused. We therefore wrote to the Council reiterating our objection to the principle of the development in this location on Green Belt grounds. By mid-December the application had not been decided, and the developer has lodged an appeal against the Council's failure to determine it.

Peter Norman

## DISTRICT PLAN

The final iteration of the District Plan before it goes to Inspection is out to consultation and can be viewed at

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan>.

Members of the Committee are developing a detailed response which will appear on our website at a later date.

The main issues for East Herts as a whole are:

- The need for a long-term strategy to create new settlements rather than allowing piecemeal additions to existing ones. We see current proposals for large-scale expansion north of Harlow as developer-led rather than a strategic approach.
- The need to address air quality issues by reducing traffic volumes and congestion, especially along the A414.

Issues relating specifically to Hertford are:

- Protecting the Green Belt west of Hertford from housing development, (see Neighbourhood Planning, p6) especially land adjacent to Panshanger Park which is of heritage as well as environmental value.

- Pegs Lane should not be designated as an employment area. If Herts County Council decides to relocate some of its activities, at least some of this land could be used for housing rather than encroach on the Green Belt.

Sue Jones

### BIRCHERLEY GREEN

Recent proposals by Wrenbridge for the redevelopment of Bircherley Green displayed at a meeting in the River Room in November elicited a range of comments from members.

Their main concerns were:

- New development should be compatible with its surroundings in size and style and not overbearing, particularly with regard to Lombard House.
- Retention of the car park is welcome, but the needs of shoppers, the residents of the proposed flats and guests of the proposed new hotel must be balanced out.
- Retention of the bus station is welcome.
- It would be highly desirable to retain a food store, even if it were smaller than the current Waitrose.
- Access for cars, buses, taxis, cycles, delivery and waste removal vehicles will need careful planning.
- Opening up the riverfront with cafés is welcome, but should not cause disturbance to residents of Folly Island.

Sue Jones

### NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

A Public Meeting arranged by Hertford Town Council, attended by possibly 120 people, to discuss a “Sele Neighbourhood Area Plan” (SNAP) took place on 26 May 2016. The publicity for the meeting stated that “Local knowledge and expertise provided by the local community will be critical in making the Plan a success”. It was announced that the meeting would discuss “New Housing, Protecting Countryside and Open Spaces, Road and Cycleway Links, Community Centres, shops and buildings”. As far as “new housing” was concerned, those present were disappointed to be told that the proposed

Neighbourhood Plan would have no alternative but to incorporate any proposals for housing sites included by the East Herts District Plan, which was under preparation. Much of the discussion was concerned with traffic problems facing residents.

The area covered by the Plan includes all the existing housing between Welwyn Road and Bramfield Lane, between Hertingfordbury Road /A414, Thieves Lane and the railway, houses on the east side of North Road north of the railway bridge, houses in Great Molewood and a few houses on the southern edge of Waterford on the way into Goldings. The area also includes the block of countryside north of Bramfield Lane including Broadoak End, Goldings and 11 Acre Wood. Other countryside north west of Longwood Road extending to include the Shooting Club and Hanging Grove is also covered.

The sites for new housing north and south of Welwyn Road (totalling 550 dwellings) now confirmed for inclusion in the Pre-Submission version of the East Herts District Plan also fall within the Plan area boundary.

Since the May public meeting there have been three meetings of a Steering Group essentially consisting of local residents who came forward at that initial meeting.

Themes identified for research by a number of sub-groups include “Community”, “Transport”, and “Public Services”. A fourth sub group was planned to examine “Potential New Housing Development - sufficient infrastructure to be provided to support new development, mix of housing types and sizes”. (Policies for the new housing areas included in the Pre-Submission District Plan already cover some of those matters.)

I attended the first two Steering Group meetings on behalf of the Civic Society. I have been concerned that all those involved understand the intended scope of a Neighbourhood Plan - both the potential and the possible limitations. This kind of plan is concerned with the use of land particularly for built development (but also for open spaces). Some of the concerns already listed by the sub-groups do not fit easily into such a plan. In December 2014 East Herts Council had issued a “Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note”. This Guidance suggests that the

Town Council prepare a separate Action Plan to deal with wider issues that don't really relate to the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. I consider that it will prove essential that the Council does this.

The new Town Clerk, Joseph Whelan, played a prominent role in the initial meetings about the SNAP. This level of involvement in Hertford neighbourhood planning cannot be expected to continue. Preliminary discussions have taken place about the preparation of a Bengeo Neighbourhood Plan and it has been suggested that other parts of the town should ultimately be covered by such processes. It is significant that the Town Council recently advertised for a Project Officer with a "new role [who] will drive forward a variety of projects including new Neighbourhood Plans and undertake feasibility work on expanding existing Council Services."

The third meeting of the Steering Group made preparations for a second Public meeting held on 13 September which took the form of a Workshop facilitated by Jacqueline Veater, Consultant and Hertford resident who has been advising Councils elsewhere in East Hertfordshire on aspects of neighbourhood planning. The aim of the workshop was to "identify issues of community concern". It was anticipated that "the steering group will prepare a draft vision for the neighbourhood plan based on the ideas and suggestions of participants". At the time of writing I am not aware that the outcomes from the workshop have been considered further.

The limited number of local residents who attended the workshop participated with enthusiasm. I was alarmed that most of those who chose to sit around a table to consider "new housing" had not been aware previously of the housing sites which by that date East Herts Council had formally decided to include in a District Plan, subject to consideration later in 2017 of the "soundness" of the Plan for the District as a whole.

If you live in the area to be covered by the Sele Neighbourhood Area Plan (see below) have your say on "what would make a difference to everyday life" by participating in a survey <http://surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Sele2016>

Terry Betts

## CIVIC SOCIETY AWARDS 2016

Many new buildings and large floor areas of developments have been completed in Hertford since buildings in the townscape were last considered for quality of design and construction awards during 2011. During late 2015 the Committee asked for a team to consider much of the work for a new round of awards.

So in January volunteers were invited to form the 2016 Awards Committee under the Chairmanship of District Councillor Jan Goodeve and at the first meeting a list of 27 sites was presented for their consideration by Society members or their owners or building contractors. The projects offered were grouped as - Houses (6); Alterations and extensions (4); Housing developments (10); and Commercial (7) to allow easier comparison and assist judgement of scale, quality of environment created and relationship with surrounding space and buildings.

During the next seven weeks members toured the Town to view and consider the shortened list of 23 projects. The next meeting of the committee was a lively and entertaining workshop where strong opinions were given and challenged and formal professional advice given by the two architects. The list was gradually reduced to 7, many of these being smaller projects where sympathetic and quality work had attracted interest and respect from committee members.

From the lengthy discussion the long list was reduced to a total of six projects suitable for an award in the several categories available to the committee. These range from **Commendations** to **Award**, and only Calton Court was considered worthy of the highest category. One building was **Highly Commended** and Commendations awarded to the remaining five.

Calton Court on the corner of Sele Farm is a three-storey development providing sixty retirement homes for couples and singles and received **The Award for 2016**.

The redevelopment of Calton House was commenced by Riversmead Housing Association and completed by Network Homes which

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combines several housing associations into a larger group better able to finance and manage the rental and retirement sector. Calton Court extends the community focus of the shopping centre with a community medical centre. The built mass is visually and physically permeable, with gardens around three sides of the perimeter providing green open space for occupants and users of footpaths and roads. The open space continues at the back where a large courtyard with planting and green community spaces is interspersed with car parking for visitors and occupants. Living spaces on the upper two floors also have access into the open air by provision of well-used glass fronted balconies, which are stocked with plants or chairs and tables. Beside the glazed balconies, the palette of materials is carefully selected for blend and skilful reduction of the mass of a large building. A plain mild yellow stock brick is matched with right render, vertical and horizontal unsealed pine boarding, and all windows, doors and glazed panels have dark grey powder-coated aluminium frames.

The whole is an approachable and sympathetic friendly grouping of community centred retirement homes.

Clients for the project are Network Homes; Architect is Colin Smart of Kyle Smart and the Contractor Hill Partnerships.



**A Highly Commended** award was made to the Beesons Yard residential development over shops. This three-storey structure built around the corner of Railway Street and Priory Street reuses a low key under-used service yard near the town centre and faces the bulk of the Christ's Hospital buildings. The materials are simple steep-pitched blue-black slate roofs above white render and a base of yellow stock bricks. All are well chosen to complement the traditional materials of the conservation area and the two structures housing services refer back to the ventilation chimneys of maltings that used to cover the area. The workmanship and detail is of a high, but simple, standard and extends to the laying of the stone slabs used to replace the ragged pavement. Off-street parking is provided beneath the mews-style flats at the rear



boundary of the site. The development still awaits the softening greenery of planting in the small garden area at the front of the site.

The Client is St Cross Developments; the Architects are Kirby Cove and the contractors St Cross Developments.



A lower key development which again packs a lot of development onto a small and awkward site is the two five bedroom houses at 65 and 67 North Road. Bravely modern in their cubist forms and strong materials, these detached dwellings step back into the large excavations under the site of a single bungalow and garage.

The areas of white render balance the areas of glazing and blue-black brick over the entrances and garages, standing out in the street scene. The strong massing of the elevations was contentious as they appeared from behind site hoardings. However the committee were unanimous in their approval of this confident statement and pleased to award a **Commendation**.

The Architects Brightside are a young firm in Fordingbridge, Hampshire and the Client and Contractor Celebration Developments.



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## CARING FOR HERTFORD

The first extension and refurbishment to receive a **Commendation** is the Six Templars pub on the Wash. Based on the redundant Conservative Working Men's Club, the building encloses the garden, and this redevelopment by Wetherspoon's has created another of the brand's large pub interiors. In the shadow of the Castle wall the back courtyard also replaces the cramped public lavatories with a new facility in joint use. The generous floor space is welcoming and companionable. The accommodation at first and second floors extends to a modelled back elevation in contrast to the plate-glass framed windows and brick of the street elevation. The new trees established in the pavement give shade and settled maturity to the elevation in contrast to the sharpness of Hertford Theatre.



Behind Saint Andrew's Church, the Vestry extension of 1905 and the Hall built in 1967 were remodelled to update the facilities and improve the quality of the external fabric. The hall was also extended against the south transept of the Victorian Church to provide a level entrance from the transept. Convenient level access was created by taking suspended wooden floors out of the vestries, with a ramp at the entrance from the churchyard.

The tiled and flat roof leaked for many years and the new curved zinc clad roofing spans the width of the building and provides a high standard of insulation. This control of heat loss is continued by insulating walls and replacing doors and windows with high performance double glazed units. Internally, facilities have been improved to a high standard which is attracting hiring by several societies and community workers. A **Commendation** was given.

The Client body are Rev Alan Stewart and the Parish Church Council; the Architect is Andrew Goodman and the contractor Borrás Construction Ltd.



The third award for an extension and refurbishment was given for work to the detached house at 5, Hagsdell Road. This back land development on a sloping site was a three bedroom house with attached garage.



Built in 1965 it was occupied by the designer and his family until 2006. The layout and fabric were good examples of the time but aluminium framed louver windows are inefficient by heat loss and other present day standards of expectation. A fourth bedroom and improvements to services and insulation were in the brief, also removing changes in floor level and maximising views of the landscape and over the Town. Thus a two storey timber framed and heavily insulated extension replaces the flat roofed garage and a two storey fully triple glazed bay window shows off the landscape.

High performance double glazing in wooden frames with aluminium facing boost the reduction of heat loss. This work also received a **Commendation**.

Clients are Mr and Mrs A. J. Threlfall; architect is R.H. Threlfall; Contractor is Prymont Build Ltd.

The sites omitted from the short list were - housing developments at the Police Station and Evron Wharf - both considered to be lacking in human scale and comfort, the former overloaded by car parks; Balls Park development is pleasant but more suited to National award schemes; houses at Willough Bow intrude into the Beane River conservation area; housing at Beckwells Field, Bengo, lacks humanity and is filled with dustbins; conversion of Bentley House is too brash and post modern; as is Sainsbury's store; the new Library is a missed opportunity; extension of 17 Highfield Road is brash and should not have been rendered; the prefabricated house at 11 Hagsdell Road lacks respect and regard for the area; housing on Dolphin Yard is all front and the backs are crude and impersonal; new houses at 30 Mangrove Road and 18a Morgans Road lack pizzazz; the new junior school at Simon Balle is too large and blocky.

The opinions and decisions recorded here are the outcome of discussions by the committee who were Sue Bennett, Judith Fawcett, Tony Freeland (chairman of Courtyard Arts), Andrew Goodman and Colin Rice, chaired by Councillor Jan Goodeve.

The Civic Society is most grateful for all the time given for visiting and forming conclusions about the many additions to the Townscape of Hertford. WOW-factor of appearance, suitability for position, comfort and convenience in use were the standards used to judge the entries - which mirrors the C17th motto for Architects - build in **Firmness, Commodity and Delight**

Richard Threlfall

## HERTFORD HERITAGE TRAIL - BLUE PLAQUES

First a recap. The Society had in mind for some years to install commemorative plaques in the town in recognition of the town's well-known sons (unfortunately no daughters at this stage) and its important buildings. Hertford and Ware Local History Group were asked to draw up a list of candidates together with relevant commemorative text. Towards the end of 2015 we submitted a trial application for listed building consent for a plaque on No.1 Fore Street (The Hertford House Hotel) commemorating the establishment of the Hertfordshire Mercury by Stephen Austin. Early in 2016 we obtained consent for the Job Centre (John Briant - bell founder), Lombard House (Sir Henry Chauncey - historian), the Prince Albert Cottages and Port Hill House and The Pest House (Thomas Dimsdale - development of the smallpox vaccination). Before we could implement the purchase and installation of the approved plaques we heard that the Town Council planned to install a heritage trail around the town. Following discussions it was agreed that the Council and the Society would form a partnership, with the Council funding the total project, including our plaques, and preparing a pamphlet as a guide, and the Society providing the resources to obtain all necessary permissions, the procurement of the plaques and to oversee their installation. A 'Plaques Working Group' was set up comprising ten volunteer members of the Society and a chairman. Working in pairs they identified and approached thirty-four owners, or their agents, seeking agreement for the installation of the plaques. Prior to the partnership the Society had obtained competitive quotations for the supply of its five plaques and selected the successful bidder.

The Council had identified forty-three sites to form its heritage trail, including nine where there are already plaques or where there is no need to install a plaque, such as the war memorial. Two sites were eliminated due either to non-cooperation of owner or lack of visibility and two are on hold pending completion of redevelopment. Of the remaining thirty sites twenty-six required listed building consent (now obtained) and four did not. Nearly all the plaques have been manufactured and delivered to the Council. Preparations are being made to

appoint a contractor and to proceed with installation; this involves working group members re-contacting building owners to make sure they are satisfied with the arrangements. It is hoped the plaques can be placed in position in a concentrated manner during the first two months of this year. Meanwhile the Council is preparing the guide for the trail and is also giving consideration to an opening event.

Andrew Sangster

### PREVIOUS TALKS TO MEMBERS

#### *Haileybury and WW1*

By 1919 the number of former Haileybury pupils slaughtered in the WW1 trenches stood at 589, exceeding the 500 then on the school rolls. Dozens of young assistant masters, or “beaks” as they were known shared the same fate and the average age of their replacement teachers was 70 as younger men enlisted in droves to fight.

On the outbreak of war the school rapidly became a recruiting ground for Lord Kitchener. The history, management style and curriculum of Haileybury (once the training college for the East India Company) already leaned towards this, as Toby Parker, its senior archivist, explained to members of Hertford Civic Society on a “trench trail” guided tour of the school’s WW1 replica trench and other memorials.

“Run like a household, it was very hierarchical, with discipline run by college prefects who administered punishment,” he said. Boys organised their own games, clubs and societies, with great importance attached to the OTC (Officer Training Corps). Over 90% of pupils joined the corps. While the sixth form was exclusively for Oxbridge entry, a boy leaving with the fifth-form certificate had a level of proficiency ideal for the first rung of an army commission, and this is what drew the public school boy into junior officer level.

Even before the outbreak of war, a strong contingent went to Sandhurst; Haileybury was also a school that moved early into science and the foundation of what is the modern curriculum today. This specialist approach was why Haileybury gained a reputation for boys joining the army - particularly the Indian army - and civil service.

As would soon become apparent, junior army officers had the shortest life expectancy in WW1, said Toby Parker. “When they did sign up, few lasted longer than six months.” There was, however, “an attitude that they were a unit and when war was declared on July 28, within days the school was losing members of the sixth form keen to join up.” By 1915, boys in the OTC were spending half their time in training since this was seen as the best way to prepare them. Soon they learned what the true horrors of war really meant, as old boys returned to train the younger ones. By 1916 the 28 “beaks” had departed for war; but by then what little teaching there was proved ineffectual as all energy went into preparing boys for the army. Not everyone went in as officers; many joined as ordinary soldiers, but the OTC was a way of getting into a good regiment. Very often they would find themselves becoming junior officers.

The replica trench is a copy, a “snatch”, of a far bigger scheme across 20 acres of Haileybury grounds 100 years ago, dug out by the boys themselves in preparation and training for the Western Front.



Although it had to be constructed above ground for safety reasons, the replica offers remarkable insight into the claustrophobic and threatening existence of officers and ranks alike. Trenches were designed, as Toby Parker described it, “for small undersized scrawny little runts from south London.” Overall they were men of about 5’5”. Here the boys learned everything - design and

basic engineering; how to insert duckboards to prevent flooding and create dugouts; how to dig fire-steps from where men would shoot the enemy. They learned to build traverses aimed at preventing the Germans storming down the length of the trench and they learned to throw grenades safely at the enemy opposite while guarding themselves against backlash from the explosion. Most of all they learned what it was actually like to live under such conditions.

While the act of combat may have evoked terror, however, the daily grind of working in the trenches was one of tedium, he said, “the most boring job on earth”. Life would begin each morning around 5am when men would stand to arms for an hour, take a break for rum rations before standing to; then it was a breakfast of bacon and bread cooked on a spade or whatever implement they could find, followed by inspection. And so it went on, bland meals, kit and rifle cleaning, rest and constant watchfulness. “Most trench life was a boring and nervous existence because you don’t know when you are going to be attacked or sent over. In a year, maybe 70 days would be spent at the Front at about ten days a time,” he said. The rest was monotony.



Life for the infantryman in the trench was limited; it was dull, dirty and unhealthy. “That’s why you see burn-out in junior officers...they are administrator, censor, counselling service, doing everything, and they are 19-year-olds. You are talking about young men having to look after themselves. They were prepared, at least in theory. They firmly believed that what they had been through at home (in the Haileybury trenches) was enough to get them through.”



*Officer's quarters*

Men who enlisted were doing so not because they loved their country but because they had to; it was part of the culture. That starts to create a new outlook as to what British society should look like after the war. They returned saying, “I should be treated with respect”; “I deserve a decent wage”. Toby Parker pointed out: “People think of the General Strike but it went further into middle-class society; there was a great deal of unrest at Haileybury.” Changes were coming; school fees had remained the same at £128 since the 1890s, but by 1916, prices were spiralling out of control, with meat prices rising by 20-30% for example. Haileybury did not recover from these financial troubles until the 1950s. “It’s remarkable that our school survived, with the need to pay staff a better wage, and having to pay other [pension]

contributions.” After theatre of war and then back home, it was never going to be the same again.

During the HCS trench trail guided tour, Toby Parker told poignant stories of how the war permeated the lives of Haileybury soldiers’ families and wider civil society. There was the Thorne family with three children - Cornelius and Marlborough died in WWI and Joseph survived only to be killed in the WWII evacuation of Dunkirk. There is a record of 2,000 letters from the boys to their mother and aunts, giving a wonderful view of their lives. Cornelius was a prefect, head of house, swimming champion and highly intelligent with a place at Cambridge. He was finishing at university when war was declared. There was the impact on the grandparents - worried sick since they had lived in the C19<sup>th</sup>, a time of relative peace and *Pax Britannica*. Such people knew little of war unless they came from an army family. The resulting collection of family letters became a book - a huge best-seller at the time.

The Thorne brothers’ mother lived beyond all her sons and it was weeks before the truth of Marlborough’s death would emerge. She became obsessed with finding out more and, after the war, insisted on going to the fields to look at the lay of the land. She was so bereft that she couldn’t let it go and became involved in spiritualism like so many. In fact, spiritualism became a powerful development in the inter-war years as people sought answers and ways to rationalise such terrible personal loss.

Much of Haileybury College chapel is dedicated to the memories of those who died in the two wars, of families such as the Lyons where three boys, Walter, Alexander and Charles, died within a very short period of each other in 1915, including Walter Lyons, a minor war poet, considered very good by many.

Toby Parker also described other powerful post-war influences on society. For example, troops coming back from the War had strong push from people such as Kipling, encouraging people to become Freemasons, an organisation with a strong spiritual content and brotherhood where damaged soldiers could find healing. “That is why there was a huge resurgence of Freemasonry after the war. People were very keen to join something so they could be with

people they knew in the war while not talking about the war.”

One notable conscientious objector was Tom Atlee, the man who introduced his brother and Haileybury alumnus Clem to Socialism. Being powerfully motivated by Christian Socialism, Tom refused to do any war work; therefore he spent long periods in Wormwood Scrubs. There is an intriguing white poppy, the symbol of peace and pacifism, at the foot of the bishop on the stained glass window commemorating the War.

A number of parents were never able to go on with their lives after such losses. They rented homes locally to be in the vicinity of where their sons had been and what they did last before the war. For them, association with the school almost became a surrogate child.

Ian Nash

### ***Social housing***

With the cost of housing forming a substantial part of most people’s household budgets, not-for-profit housing associations provide an important service in supplying accommodation at below market rents. Network Homes, which absorbed Riversmead, works with East Herts Council and fourteen London boroughs to address this need through their 20,000 properties (including 4,600 in East Herts), as their commercial director, David Gooch, and head of neighbourhood services, Jackie Trundell, explained to the Society at their talk in November.

Some of their stock is ex-council housing taken over from local authorities but they also aim to build one thousand homes a year across their entire operation, either by building on their own sites or by working with private developers to include an element of “affordable” housing within those schemes. Although there are some central government grants available, housing associations have to finance their operations by selling some of their properties on the open market, by shared ownership, and by collecting rents.

Properties for rent are allocated in agreement with the local authority, which maintains a points-based waiting list based on the applicant’s local connection and family and

medical circumstances. As different types of property become available (for example, family-sized, single person or adapted for elderly people), the Council selects suitable potential applicants who can ask to be considered. Network Homes carries out a risk assessment of each applicant, including financial risk to ensure they can afford the rent, and whether they have a poor payment record or certain criminal convictions, but few applicants are rejected.

Finding sites for new build is difficult in this area but some small developments have recently been built in Francis Road and Parnell Road in Ware. Larger schemes always involve partnership working, either with the private sector or with public authorities. Network Homes has been involved providing housing within a number of private schemes, such as Smeaton Court (Weston Homes), Mill Road (Redrow), Ware Road police station site (Barratts) and the Hertford Regional College site (Persimmon). An element of affordable housing is usually a condition of planning permission, but working in partnership with the private sector is always a challenge because they will try to negotiate it down to the lowest possible level to maintain their profitability.

Examples of schemes working with the public sector are Calton Court, which provides specialist accommodation for elderly people and a doctor's surgery. Here Network Homes works with Herts County Council, which holds the social care budget, and aims to provide flexible care as the elderly tenants' care needs change. In Ware, forty seven new homes, eleven of which will be for sale, will be built on the Chauncy School site. This involved working with the school and the Department for Education and will enable the school to build a new sports hall, which will also be open to the public.

Older housing stock inherited from the local authority provides a different kind of challenge as it now needs upgrading and alteration. The Ridgeway presents financial and technical problems, such as poor insulation, and some buildings are being restructured to provide family accommodation. While the work is in progress, tenants have to be temporarily housed elsewhere.

Network Homes prides itself on being much more than a property manager by working with its

tenants and the community as well as with government bodies and developers. It aims to provide at least 90% customer satisfaction rates, to be a good employer and to help tenants by working with organisations such as Future Living, which provides counselling to survivors of domestic abuse.

To contribute to community-building, it established three residents' associations this year, ran a local fun day in Ware and involved the wider community in celebrating the Queen's birthday in Tewin. "We ... initiate surveys and find what people like or dislike about living in the neighbourhood. It's about improving the local environment, providing opportunities for work, particularly in those areas high in deprivation," said Jackie Trundell. Play areas also help to bring a community together so Network Homes has raised money through contributions and grants to improve the play area at Pinehurst, making sure local people were involved in the decision-making throughout, and plans similar improvements at Hertford Heath. "We worked with the community in Pinehurst. They were trying to make improvements to the playing field. They tapped into being part of the working group. They talked about having tried to put in playing equipment for years and we said we had the solution, through matched funding with the help of a grant. There was an open day with ideas and designs and we were eventually able to cater for all people up to teenagers," she explained.

Housing association properties are often connected in the public mind with anti-social behaviour, but this concern can be overrated. "We have only had 144 reported cases throughout the 4,600 Network Homes since April; 67 were for noise and neighbourhood disputes. Most cases are only small infringements," said Jackie Trundell. Whatever the issue reported, however, an action plan is always completed. "We try to manage expectations because it's far better if people can sort it out themselves." For more serious issues, Network Homes tries to mediate where possible by working closely with the local council and the police, and funds two community support officers.

Discussion following the talk illuminated challenges for housing associations in the future.

In answer to questions from the floor, Jackie Trundell said the government fixed the cost of affordable accommodation notionally at 80% of market rates and, while existing tenants are secure, “there’s a challenge for us”, she said, stressing that the wider conversation was yet to be had. “It’s the political environment that forces us into the place we are at.” If someone was eligible for financial support at the moment the future is clear, “but with universal credit, families will be facing significant reductions. We are concerned about the impact of that and are working closely with local authorities to map the effect that is going to have. The message is that you should be in employment but clearly not everyone is going to be in that position for various reasons”. In addition, Government subsidies for building have been cut from 75% to 15%, right-to-buy is taking properties out of their control, and building new properties means competing with private developers to buy land. As housing associations face a difficult future, East Herts Council’s waiting list stands at around 2,000, and is unlikely to diminish any time soon.

Sue Jones

### *Visit to Chatham historic dockyard*

At its height in the C18th the naval dockyard at Chatham was one of the largest manufacturing sites in the world, employing an average of 1,700 workers in over twenty trades, including ship design, wood working, sail and rope making, treating wood with pitch and paint, and metal working, as well as office work. The process was labour intensive - building a ship such as Nelson’s *Victory* could take up to six years.

Although the dockyard closed in 1984, there is plenty to see in the present day and the scale of the operation is still apparent. Here are some of the biggest industrial buildings of their time. The Ropery is 346 metres long while some of the covered slipways, built first in timber and later in iron and resembling up-turned ships’ hulls, were probably Europe’s biggest wide span structures, pre-dating the great train sheds at King’s Cross and Paddington. Also on view (from the outside only) are offices and the homes of high ranking officials, mostly in elegant C18th brick. The Commissioner’s garden is open to visitors.

You can watch a demonstration of the technique of rope-making in which one worker walked backwards down the length of the building drawing out the spun fibres while another used hand-powered machinery to twist them together into ropes. Each ship required at least twenty miles of rope in differing thicknesses and in lengths of up to 900 feet. Exhibits in other buildings explain other aspects of ship building, often using dramatised reconstructions projected onto the walls.



*A Society member demonstrates rope-making*

There are three preserved warships. HMS *Cavalier* was one of ninety-six emergency warships built in WW2; she operated in the Western Approaches and on the Arctic convoys and is now preserved as a memorial to the 11,000 men lost at sea during this war. HMS *Gannet* was built in the late C19th and saw service in the Pacific, Mediterranean and Red Sea and as the HQ of the Royal Naval reserve before retiring to be used as a dormitory ship at the training school on the R Hamble. Finally, HM submarine *Ocelot*, launched in 1962, was the last warship built for the Royal Navy at Chatham.

This is a fascinating and packed day out, but the site is extensive and good footwear is essential!

More information at [www.thedockyard.co.uk](http://www.thedockyard.co.uk)

Sue Jones