

# Hertford Civic Society Newsletter - June 2023

## Contents

### AGM Papers -

- Report of the Committee p2
- Treasurer's Report p4

### Jubilee Quiz about Hertford and its Heritage p6

### Talks to Members -

- The malting industry in Hertfordshire – Helen Gibson p8
- Energy efficiency in our homes – Andrew Goodman p8
- Managing Hertford's Rivers - Ian Davis p9
- Swifts in Hertford - Clive Fleming p10
- Designing Gardens in a Changing Climate - Simon Smith p11

### Answers to Quiz p11

### Committee Members and Contacts p12

Welcome to the June 2023 edition of the Newsletter.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday June 28<sup>th</sup> at the United Reform Church in Cowbridge at 8pm. The Committee's and Treasurer's Reports can be found below.

### AGENDA

- Minutes of the AGM held on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2022
- Report of the Committee for 2022
- Hon Treasurer's Report and Accounts
- Election of Officers
- Election of Members of the Committee
- Any other business

The current Officers and Committee are listed on p12 of this Newsletter. All retire annually. The Constitution provides for up to sixteen Committee members in addition to four Officers. Nominations for election of Officers and Members of the Committee should be made in writing to the Chairman, Malcolm Ramsay, supported by a seconder and with the written consent of the nominee. Nominations for election as an Officer must be made at least seven days before the AGM, but nominations

for election of Members of the Committee will be accepted at the meeting.

The meeting will be followed by a talk by historian Clare Gittings on Three Tudor Monarchs Growing Up In And Around Hertford. King Henry VIII had three children, each succeeding him in turn: Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth. They largely grew up at Hertford Castle and at the nearby royal palaces of Hunsdon and Hatfield. This talk will explore their changing relationships with each other, and with their father. Using portraits and original documents, it will connect local and national events, showing the importance of this area in Tudor history.

Doors will open at 7.30pm, tea/coffee will be available from 7.40pm and guests will be very welcome. Nearest parking is St Andrew Street car park or Sainsbury's.

## AGM PAPERS

### MINUTES OF THE HERTFORD CIVIC SOCIETY AGM 2022

The Hertford Civic Society AGM was held on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2022

Agenda -

- To receive the Minutes of the 2021 AGM
- To receive the Report of the Committee
- To receive the Treasurer's Report and Accounts
- Election of Officers and Members of the Committee

Apologies were received from Sally Paque, Anne Miles, Mary Sykes, Susie Hunt, David Hunt, John Page, Vicky Glover-Ward, Viv Bradman

The Report of the Committee for 2021 was accepted.

The Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2021 were accepted. John Bevan stepped down as Treasurer and was replaced by Geoffrey Rice. Tom Busby stepped down as Examiner of Accounts and was replaced by Paul Wernick.

Membership of the Committee, with John Bevan being replaced by Geoffrey Rice, was accepted.

### REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 2022

The pandemic eased in 2022, but did not vanish. We adjusted our patterns of activity, while remaining cautious. We organised three talks on Zoom in the first half of 2022:

- Helen Gibson: Hertfordshire's historic malting industry
- Andrew Goodman: insulating our houses
- Ian Davis: managing Hertford's rivers

All three talks were high-quality events. We like to put talks on our website: more on that below.

### Other events for members

Later in the year, on a lovely day in June, we took part in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration, as organised by Hertford Town Council in the castle grounds. This was a popular public event. We ran a stall, complete with a quiz about Hertford and its heritage. Anyone still keen to test their knowledge can tackle the nine questions below, which precisely one person managed to answer correctly. On the day, the prize was a bottle of 'Four Rivers of Hertford Gin'. This is the gin brewed by Spirit of Hertfordshire Distillery; the bottle was provided by the gin-makers (more below on this). On a sunny day In September, we held a party for members in the sculpture garden at Dunkirks. This social event was billed as a chance to sample the Hertford gin, or else white wine or soft drinks – and as an opportunity to enjoy various sculptures, in an outdoor setting.

### New website

The committee in general, and Milena Nuti and Anna Stanton in particular, as the project managers, worked hard to construct a new website for the Society. The address remains the same – [www.hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk) – but the content, organisation and images have

been significantly updated. While the technical aspects were contracted out to professional designers Eugene Conlon and Blended Creative, this was a complex project needing plenty of active input from the two managers, from beginning to end. Website design is more sophisticated than it used to be. As well as improved functionality, websites need to look attractive and engaging. Our website benefits from some lovely photos, taken by college students from Herts Regional College (full credits on the site). Work on the website was largely completed by the end of 2022. A key purpose of our website is to explain our vision. What are we trying to achieve, looking ahead? There are other more archival aspects as well. We normally make available the talks/presentations delivered to members. They deserve and receive wider audiences than they get when first delivered. Talks can be found on the website by clicking on Menu (top right corner of home pages/photos), then on Archives, and finally Previous Talks. We hope you will explore the website and we welcome suggestions and contributions for additional content. Please get in touch if you have a story to tell or would like to read about. If you would like to assist the Webmaster with the maintenance of the website, we would be delighted to hear from you - particularly if you have skills in Wordpress.

### **Confluence fountain, the Four Rivers of Hertford Gin, and the Yarn Bombers**

The fountain, right in the middle of Hertford, is our major asset and responsibility. It's been in Salisbury Square for almost 30 years since October 1994 – it was actually created in the early 1980s. As time rolls by, it seems increasingly well loved, sometimes in unexpected ways. It also shows occasional signs of age. Early in 2022 it started using far more water than ever before: well over a cubic meter daily. Why? At first we had no clue, but gradually the mystery was solved by committee members (Richard Threlfall in particular) and our plumber/engineer (Roy Wilkerson), who has been looking after it since its first arrival in Salisbury Square. Adjustments were made, and it now uses less than a cubic meter per week.



Another very different kind of attention was paid to the fountain in December 2022. The Yarn Bombers (or the Secret Society of Hertford Crafters) really went to town with the fountain, by then turned off for the winter. In the dead of night, they festooned it with knitted sprites and countless other decorative touches. The fountain became even more of a focus than ever: a Christmas treat for the town at the end of what, for many people, had been a difficult year.

If the fountain can be expensive to run, a small-scale saviour turned up in 2022. Richard Daniel, a key force behind the Spirit of Hertfordshire Distillery, wanted to make Hertford gin, and to market it with an image of Confluence fountain. Did we own it? Yes, we did, so we had copyright. He foraged local 'botanicals' to lend flavour – and then asked us to make sure that we liked the taste of his gin, before going public with the Four Rivers of Hertford Gin. It is delicious. Do try it for yourself, if you have not done so already. You can have it delivered, or buy it in the Tourist Information Centre (opposite the Theatre). For each bottle sold he pays the Society a royalty of £1.

### **Planning review**

The Society's planning group continues to be co-ordinated by Andrew Sangster. The work of the group remains a 'core business' of the Society. Some of their main issues in 2022 are mentioned below. In our last report (for 2021), we noted that the three massive projects in central Hertford were essentially stalled. They comprise: Hertford Theatre, Hartham Leisure Centre, and Lea Wharf. However, across much of 2022, work was visibly happening. (Hopefully all three will be completed by 2024.)

### **Transport and other community campaigning**

Transport continues as an enhanced focus, in various ways: We commented on proposals by Hertfordshire County Council to enhance the area in and around Hertford East Station (with Terry Betts leading here). We commented on the final draft of the Kingsmead Neighbourhood Plan, which has a strong focus on transport issues. In our response, we welcomed in particular the Plan's advocacy of action to make Rush Green Roundabout more fit for purpose. We took part in an online meeting with the developers seeking to rebuild the Caxton Hill industrial estate – and we encouraged them in particular to include vehicle access to the A414 (rather than just the Ware Road). This aspect has been adopted by the developers in their final scheme, which we broadly welcomed.

### **Financial accounting and communications**

2022 was the first year for which Geoffrey Rice acted as Treasurer. In preparing the accounts for 2022 he was guided by a new Examiner, Paul Wernick. We are grateful to Geoffrey and Paul for stepping into these new roles. Of course, we are also glad of the continuing work by Annette Robinson (membership) and Terry Betts (communications with members, via email in particular, and sometimes on Zoom). We are always happy to hear of offers of help from members. You don't have to join the committee (Annette isn't on it, for instance); just be willing to assist. Think of it as a learning experience, and as a chance to work with others, for a good cause.

### **HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2022 (Registered charity number 266111)**

The accounts for 2022 are fairly straightforward but the Society's tradition of preparing the figures on an accruals basis means that some activity is hidden from view. Much of the

work on the new website was done in the year but the costs were fully provided for in 2021 so that that this year's figure comprises only the ongoing hosting costs. Other costs were generally lower: meetings were held on Zoom and there were not the problems with the fountain experienced in some years and expected in late 2021. There was one social event: gin in the Chairman's orchard in September. The society pays annual subscriptions to Civic Voice and the CPRE (the latter just £36). On the income side, membership remains close to 300 but the net movement has been downwards. A generous new source of income is donations based on gin sales by the Hertfordshire Distillery. The rise in interest rates from next to nothing to over 4% per annum means much higher income again from the society's funds held on deposit. To help counter the effects of inflation and to secure some growth in income over the longer term, we are moving some of the money in the COIF Charities Deposit Fund to the COIF Charities Investment Fund. The outcome for the year was a surplus of £1,814 and funds carried forward of £86,172. Our thanks to Paul Wernick who has taken on the role of honorary examiner.

#### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

	Notes	31 December 2022 TOTAL £	31 December 2021 TOTAL £
<b>INCOME</b>			
Membership subscriptions and donations		<b>1,512</b>	1,571
Corporate donation: The Hertfordshire Distillery Limited		<b>184</b>	-
Social events		<b>106</b>	-
Interest on deposits		<b>1,036</b>	13
Recovery of Gift Aid	3	<b>175</b>	200
		<b><u>3,013</u></b>	<b><u>1,784</u></b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
General meetings and lectures		<b>112</b>	252
Social events		<b>56</b>	-
Website		<b>57</b>	2,628
Insurance		<b>205</b>	359
Depreciation of equipment		-	33
Other expenses		-	550
Subscriptions and donations		<b>478</b>	451
Civic Activities			
Fountain	4	<b>291</b>	1,358
Public Appeals		-	250
		<b><u>1,199</u></b>	<b><u>5,881</u></b>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>1,814</b>	-4,097

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

### Fixed Assets

PA and projection equipment (cost £1,397, fully depreciated as at 31 December 2021)

- -

### Current Assets

Debtors and prepayments	3	<b>1,537</b>	1,213
Cash at bank and on deposit	2	<b>84,859</b>	<b>86,311</b>
		<b>86,396</b>	87,524
Creditors and accruals	4	<b>-224</b>	-3,166

### Net Assets

**86,172** **84,358**

Accumulated Fund brought forward		<b>84,358</b>	88,455
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		<b>1,814</b>	-4,097

### Accumulated Fund carried forward

**86,172** **84,358**

### NOTES:

1. These accounts have been prepared on the accruals basis.
2. The cash at bank and on deposit comprises £83,707 in the COIF Charities Deposit Fund (2021: £85,882) and £1,152 at Barclays Bank (2021: £429).
3. Gift Aid can be claimed on membership subscriptions to the extent that members have made the appropriate written declaration. No Gift Aid has been received from HM Revenue and Customs since 2018 so these accounts include an estimate of the amounts receivable in respect of subscriptions paid by members up to 31 December 2022: £966 is included in debtors and prepayments.
4. The costs of running the fountain in 2022 amounted to £653 (maintenance and water supply). This total has been reduced by deducting £362 provided for in respect of 2021 but in the event not required.

### REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

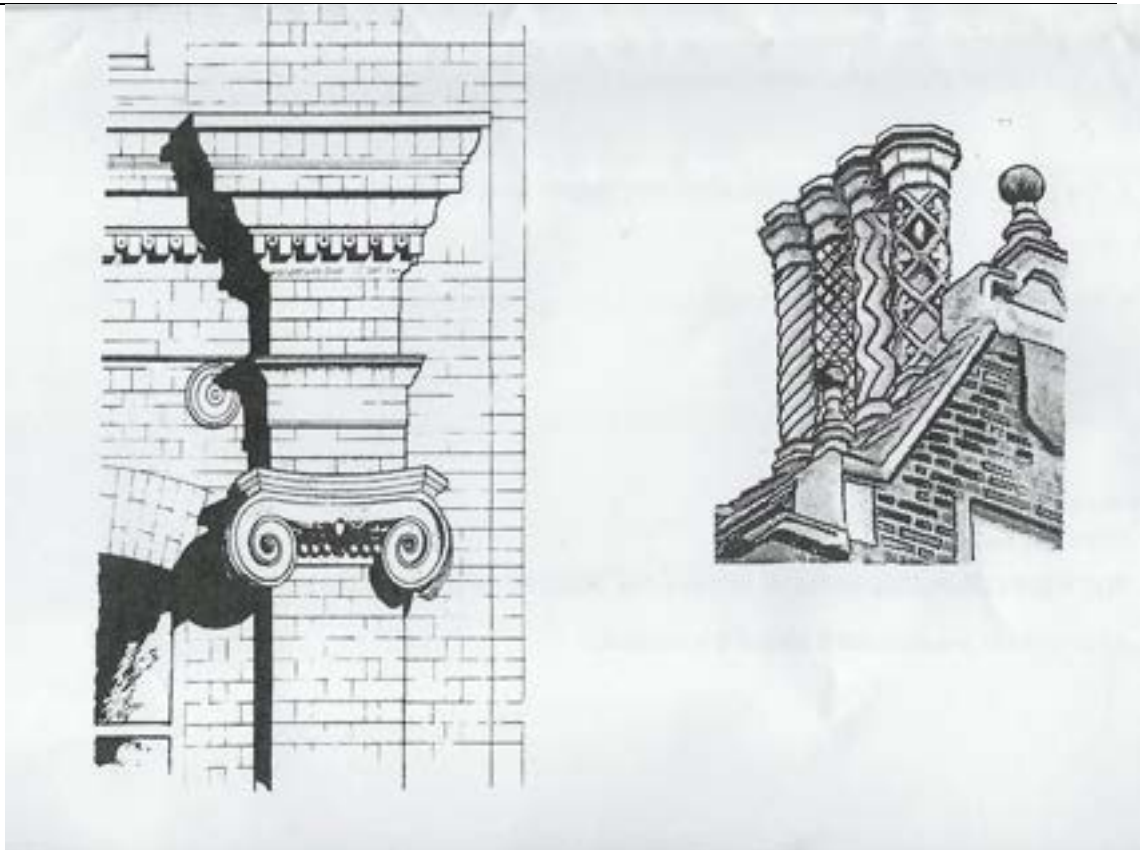
I have examined the books and vouchers of Hertford Civic Society and, with the information and explanations received, report that the Balance Sheet and Statement of Financial Activities accord therewith.

Paul Wernick 23 May 2023

### Jubilee quiz about Hertford and its heritage

1. In the Middle Ages there was an important castle in Hertford. Between the reigns of William I (1066-1087) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603), how many of our monarchs stayed here: (a) 5 or (b) 10 or (c) 15?

2. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which Hertford minister co-founded the capital of what became an American state?
3. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a killer disease for which some of the earliest inoculations in Europe were carried out on children in Hertford, together with prisoners in London. What was the disease?
4. Which early 19<sup>th</sup> century pupil of the grammar school in Hertford became a world-famous naturalist/scientist?
5. In November 1830 a well-attended public meeting took place in Shire Hall in Hertford. Was this meeting called to protest about (a) the price of bread or (b) the need to abolish slavery or (c) the need for parliamentary reform?
6. Which 20<sup>th</sup> century author of books for boys and girls, featuring pilots in war and peace, grew up in Hertford, living above his father's tailor shop?
7. In the middle of Hertford there is a fountain, made by a sculptor now well known – he has also worked for, among others, Prince Charles [now Charles III] and Salisbury Cathedral. What is his name?



- 8 The pilaster/classical details: what building in which street?
- 9 The chimneys: what building in which street?

Answers on p11

## TALKS TO MEMBERS

Most of our talks are recorded. For access, go to the website at [www.hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk) then Menu, Archives and Previous Talks.

### **The malting industry in Hertfordshire – Helen Gibson**

Sited between the barley fields of East Anglia and the increasing demand for beer from London's growing population, Hertford, Ware and Bishop's Stortford's malting industry thrived during the nineteenth century.

Barley grains were soaked until they sprouted roots and shoots, which are a sign the grain is converting some of its starch into glucose, the essential ingredients for making alcohol. The grains were then spread out on the floor of the maltings, raked frequently and gradually dried. Then they were roasted in kilns, recognisable as cone-shaped buildings, which had a wood-fired furnace under the floor. Once roasted the malt was ready to be sent to the brewers; the degree of roasting was important in determining the final colour and flavour of the beer.

Although maltings were usually built of brick, the roofs were of timber, so fire was a constant danger, even though the timber was usually plastered inside and out. Nevertheless, the remains of a number of maltings can still be seen in this area, although they are now converted to other purposes.

Malt was also used as a medicine and a food supplement in the growing pharmaceutical industry, hence the establishment of the Allen and Hanbury company (now part of GSK) in Ware. The need for improved transport for grain, fuel and the finished product led to the creation of the Stort Navigation down to Broxbourne.

Sue Jones

### **Energy efficiency in our homes – Andrew Goodman**

How green is your home? Local architect Andrew Goodman reminded us that the UK target is an 80% reduction in our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050 and since 75% of the houses we have today will still be here at that date, it is up to us to make our homes as energy-efficient as we can.

'Passive house' principles (Passivhaus in German) developed on the Continent have made it possible to build dwellings that maintain a comfortable temperature with no energy input at all, mainly by preventing heat loss through insulation, glazing and airtightness. While it is almost impossible to achieve this with an existing building, the techniques can help us to improve what we already have.

Although new buildings can have a layer of insulation fitted to the outside, this is not usually practical for existing buildings. However, internal insulation can achieve a great deal. Roof spaces should be lagged and walls can be lined with wood-fibre board, but it is most important to seal junctions between walls, floors, and ceilings to prevent heat loss. It may



be easier to fit membranes to walls, but they must not be pierced by plumbing or electricians. But even where new insulation is not possible, plaster in old houses can be effective, provided junctions are well sealed.

Airtightness prevents a lot of heat leakage. Heat loss in a typical Victorian house with no improvements has been estimated to be the equivalent of leaving two double doors permanently open; modern houses, by comparison, are expected to lose only a quarter of this. Extractor fans, and any other pipework that goes to the outside, should be very carefully fitted and sealed. However, the desirability of total airtightness was debated by the audience, some of whom were concerned that poor ventilation would lead to damage to the building and bad health due to more condensation and increased incidence of allergies and breathing complaints.

A government scheme called the Green Deal is being developed to work with utility suppliers and improvements installers to upgrade the energy efficiency of our homes. Home owners will be able to borrow money, repayable through their utility bills, for improvements. It is not clear how this will work out, however, since Andrew thinks that, firstly, we do not have enough properly trained installers and secondly, projections have suggested that it may cost as much as £85,000 per home to achieve an 80% reduction in energy use.

Andrew was joined by Stephen Begg from Energy At Work Ltd and Liz Bell from Green Energy, who described some advances in low energy light bulbs and how electricity generation is increasingly being powered by activities such as tomato growing or pig farming, which can use anaerobic digesters on animal and green waste. These produce gas which can be burned to produce steam to generate electricity, which can then be fed into the National Grid for sale to domestic customers.

Andrew concluded by advising us to have a plan for the whole building before we begin making major changes to our homes and to weigh up the cost and disruption of the work against expected energy savings. It is difficult to get good advice on all aspects of energy efficiency in your home, but the most effective savings can usually be made through insulation and by reducing the amount and temperature of the hot water we use.

Sue Jones

### **Managing Hertford's Rivers - Ian Davis**

We all want enough water in our rivers for them to thrive and give us pleasure but we don't want them to flood. This seems to be no easy task, as we have all witnessed with rivers surging over floodplains and a proliferation of flood-alert notices on our roads.

Is it all down to climate change or can we alleviate the problem with better management? Regardless of climate issues, our rivers are under strain: London is demanding more water from the New River, while the River Lea that feeds it must retain levels to keep boats moving and sustain our natural environment. The Beane has been drying-up while pumping more water to Stevenage.

How we tackle such issues was the subject of a fascinating talk by Ian Davis, a chartered water and environment manager who is also a local farmer. He drew attention to how rights of landowners and public bodies to extract water too often conflict with the responsibilities of an under-resourced National Rivers Authority to maintain and manage 650 miles of Hertfordshire's water course and river flood defences.

While reviewing the current risks and maintenance issues around these waterways of "national importance", Ian Davis pointed to a real threat encroaching on Hertford's doorsteps. "People with basements – once coal cellars converted to residential use – should be nervous about sleeping there," he said.

Before reaching such points of no return, he said, much can be done to avert such disasters said the man who looked after Hertford's rivers for the Environment Agency for 20 years.  
Ian Nash

### **Swifts in Hertford - Clive Fleming from the Hertford Swift Group**

Nowhere is the decline in bird populations more apparent than in the disappearance of swifts from Hertford. "This is a story from absolute abundance in the history of this town to what is now on the Red List," as Clive Fleming from the Hertford Swift Group described in a revealing talk.

Key factors behind a population decline of 60% since the 1990s are the restoration and modernisation of houses and loss of timber-framed buildings such as Bircherley Green and Folly Bridge Yard – destroying habitats. Also, the rise of industrial farming has vastly reduced the insect population. A swift will eat up to 20,000 insects a day.

Parts of the town still with notable swift colonies are Sele Road, Cromwell Road, Port Vale, and Gosselin Road. All have pre-war and Victorian housing with eaves and open ventilated roofs giving perfect nesting locations. One particularly strong location is George Street, where the erection of seven nesting boxes is aiding recovery. And this goes to the heart of the Hertford Swift Group's long-term recovery plan, says Clive Fleming.

Hertford Swift Group was started in 2019 by Jenny Rawson to raise awareness, source and erect specially designed swift boxes around town and assess the remaining swift population in Hertford. As the RSPB has found, estimating the number is not easy; flying at 70mph, the swift is among the fastest of birds and lives in flight between the UK and Congo, except when briefly nesting. It arrives in May and departs before late July.

Clive Fleming goes on to describe how we can all help create the right environment in our gardens and around our homes to encourage the return of the swift – and maybe attract other species in the process. And to end on a positive note, modern buildings do not have to be a problem: specially designed ‘swift bricks’ (which serve the same function as nest boxes) can be incorporated into new buildings at the design stage and architects and planning authorities should be made aware of this.

Ian Nash

### **Designing Gardens in a Changing Climate - Simon Smith, CIEEM**

In the past, gardening has often been about creating whole new landscapes quite different from the one you already have, but in an era of climate change, gardeners should concentrate on limiting the damage this can do. In particular, they should aim to keep carbon dioxide emissions low, discourage pests, avoid pathogens, and try to create regenerative landscapes.

But rather than thinking of these guidelines as limitations, consider them as inspiration for new approaches. We have lost 60% of our insect life since 1980, but invertebrates can thrive in a gravel garden, and meadow and cornfield planting support many nectar-yielding flowers. You can also provide insect ‘hotels’ in various styles and sizes.

Don’t use peat, because although you are creating good soil, you are destroying an existing landscape, so use mulches instead. Keeping hard landscaping to a minimum will reduce run-off and allow water to permeate the soil and be stored in the aquifer rather than overtaxing the drainage system and reducing our water supplies.

Fortunately, many useful methods of responsible gardening are also labour-saving! Keep digging to a minimum to preserve soil structure, support native plants and wildlife in your lawn with ‘No Mow May’, leave flowerheads on over winter, and remember that so-called ‘weeds’ are often good sources of nectar and beautiful in their own right. “Tidiness,” said Simon Smith, “is the enemy of biodiversity.”

Sue Jones

### **Answers to Quiz**

1. 15 2. Samuel Stone 3. Smallpox 4. Alfred Russell Wallace 5. (b) slavery 6. William Earl Johns 7. William Pye 8. Yeomanry House, St Andrew Street 9. 61 Fore Street/Dirties

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