



## Hertford Civic Society Newsletter Spring 2024: Notice of AGM

The 2024 AGM of Hertford Civic Society will be held on April 10 in the United Reformed Church, Cowbridge at 8.00pm (doors open at 7.30pm). Papers for this meeting and procedures for electing the committee and the officers can be found on p7 of the Newsletter. Parking is available in the public carpark in St Andrew St. or at Sainsbury's.

Contents	
Notice of AGM 2024	p1
Current Issues for Hertford –	
County Hall	p1
Lea Wharf	p2
Committee Members and Contacts	p3
Talks to Members –	
Tudor Monarchs growing up in and around Hertford	p4
A Career in Sport	p5
Chalkstreams in Hertfordshire	p6
AGM Papers	p7

The meeting will be followed by a talk on Hertfordshire Highwaymen by Nick Blatchley.

The AGM papers include the 'Report by Main Committee for 2023' (p8) and the 'Honorary Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2023'.

### Current Issues for Hertford

#### County Hall: re-development of site

Hertfordshire County Council has announced that most staff are to leave County Hall. While the front part is earmarked for retention 'for democratic and civic purposes', a process of marketing for employment use is being carried out for the remainder of the site. This is because

County Hall is not being used to capacity and the County Council faces significant financial pressures.

Hertford Civic Society requested a meeting with the team responsible for the re-development of the site. Their names are below.

Here are some brief notes on this event, which took place on 21 November 2023.

During an initial phase (one year), marketing of the site as a place of office employment will be explored by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), though this is not expected to generate a result.

HCC is holding monthly meetings with East Herts Council (EHC). EHC is responsible for planning in East Herts - including any proposal that might be made by HCC for the County Hall site. The HCC team confirmed that as part of their review of the EHC District Plan they might expect to be proposing alternative uses of the site, while retaining the front buildings which are listed (grade II\*). The HCC team said that due to Covid/flexible working (often from home) lunchtime spend by HCC staff within Hertford has already been much impacted, for some time. Civic uses are expected to continue for the front buildings e.g. Weddings and other possible options - and the Chamber could be opened up for alternative community uses e.g. orchestras. The woodland and cricket pitch are to be retained as they are; sources of funds are being explored to re-provision the cricket pavilion, which was the victim of an arson attack. Hertford Civic Society suggested this be communicated to nearby residents so as to avoid unnecessary anxiety.

The major HCC staff move to Stevenage is expected Spring 2024.

Hertford Civic Society reiterated the need to ensure the site is of high quality visually and environmentally, and that a wide range of possible uses should be considered which could benefit Hertford.

Car parking - this was one potential type of community use being explored as an interim measure e.g. Richard Hale has expressed some interest.

The whole process of change and re-development is expected to take some years.

*For Hertford Civic Society:*

Malcolm Ramsay, Terry Betts, Jan Goodeve, Mike Howarth

*For HCC:*

Sass Pledger - Director of Property Robert Smyth - Strategic Asset Manager

Madeleine Lewis - Project Manager

## **Lea Wharf and delivery lorries**

Lea Wharf is in action. This finally plugs 'the hole in the heart of Hertford' after Waitrose closed in 2018 and was then demolished. Hertford Civic Society very much welcomes the completion of Lea Wharf. There's just one ongoing issue where we hope a good resolution can be achieved. This is the occasional need for large lorries to make deliveries to the businesses along the ground floor of Lea Wharf.

Lea Wharf's riverside roadway is also much used by pedestrians, so there is potential for conflict. Chase New Homes, developers of Lea Wharf, are obliged to agree a 'delivery and servicing management plan' for vehicle access, and to review this as necessary in partnership with East Herts Council. Like a good few other people who

posted objections on the planning portal of East Herts Council, Hertford Civic Society objected to deliveries happening in the lateafternoons and evenings - when more people would be walking along the riverside route for the lorries. Mornings would be better. We will be watching to see how all of this works out in reality. Malcolm Ramsay

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND CONTACTS

Margaret Anthony  
07525442275  
[margaretanthony@hotmail.com](mailto:margaretanthony@hotmail.com)

Terry Betts  
24 Morgans Road Hertford SG13 8BS  
01992 583643  
[betts.terry30@gmail.com](mailto:betts.terry30@gmail.com)

Peter Godfrey  
[peter@godfrey.me.uk](mailto:peter@godfrey.me.uk)

Jan Goodeve  
16B North Road  
Mob +44 7954 139651  
Twitter @JanGoodeve

Sue Jones  
9 Villiers Street  
Hertford SG13 7BW  
01992 587949  
[editor@hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:editor@hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk)

Milena Nuti  
[milenanuti@gmail.com](mailto:milenanuti@gmail.com)

Malcolm Ramsay - Chairman  
and Social Secretary  
Dunkirks Farm Southside  
Queens Road Hertford SG13 8BJ  
01992 500002  
[malcolm.ramsay789@btinternet.com](mailto:malcolm.ramsay789@btinternet.com)

Geoffrey Rice - Treasurer  
[geoffrey.rice1@btinternet.com](mailto:geoffrey.rice1@btinternet.com)

Annette Robinson - Membership  
Secretary (not on the Committee)  
11 Norman Avenue Bishop's Stortford  
CM23 4HL  
01279 833242  
[membership@hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk)

Anna Stanton

Richard Threlfall  
18 Mangrove Road Hertford SG13 8AJ  
[rhthrelfall@gmail.com](mailto:rhthrelfall@gmail.com)

Members of the Committee can also be contacted via the Society's website at  
<https://hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk>

## TALKS TO MEMBERS

*Recordings of many of our talks are, or soon will be, available on our website at <https://hertfordcivicsociety.org.uk>*

### **Tudor Monarchs Growing Up In And Near Hertford - Clare Gittings**

While it was not uncommon for 16th century upper class parents to have little to do with the day-to-day care of their offspring, the children of Henry VIII were also strongly impacted by the politics of the times, as Clare Gittings explained.

Homes away from London could provide peace and quiet with a healthy atmosphere and good quality housing, and Hertford Castle, Hatfield Old Palace and Hunsdon House amply met these needs, but there was no experience of family life for the three half-siblings and they were often moved from place to place. Henry wanted a son to inherit the throne and secure the Tudor dynasty, but this ambition was thwarted by issues of health and religious turmoil.

His first child, Mary, was born in 1516 and brought up as a strict Roman Catholic by her Spanish mother Catherine of Aragon, but when no son appeared, Henry wanted a divorce, which led to the break with Rome and began the turbulence of the Reformation. His second wife, Anne Boleyn, produced another daughter, Elizabeth, in 1533, and Anne was executed shortly afterwards on charges of adultery and incest with her brother. Marriage to Jane Seymour produced the desired son Edward in 1537, but this did not solve Henry's problems in the long term. Jane died shortly after giving birth and Henry was constantly distracted by ill health and affairs of state. Edward was never strong, although he lived long enough to succeed his father, and reigned 1547-53, when he was succeeded first by Catholic Mary and then Protestant Elizabeth.

Mary and Elizabeth both received a good education from tutors, but family life was seriously lacking. Both were declared illegitimate, Mary was separated from her mother and prevented from attending her funeral, Elizabeth's governess Lady Bryan complained that she had no proper clothes and they were frequently moved from place to place. Misfortune and politics had made a good family life impossible for the three children who would grow up to become responsible for their country's governance. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jaMxEGgRrk>

Sue Jones

## A Career in Sport - Stuart Storey

Had Stuart Storey listened to his headteacher and knuckled down more to academic work rather than pursue sport, then East Hertfordshire's sports and leisure centre at Wodson Park might never have reached the heights of excellence it has achieved.

While one should always be cautious about crediting the contributions of a single benefactor, there is no doubt the former Olympics champion and BBC sports commentator did more than most, through fund-raising and cajoling people in power, to create a sport and recreation facility that has given so many opportunities to the community.

Stuart's rise from over-enthusiastic schoolboy hurdles champion to gold medal winner and doyen of sports commentary was told in his own ebullient, informative and amusing words at the winter meeting [November 2023] of Hertford Civic Society.

Now Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Wodson Park Trust in Ware, it was his drive that helped to establish the large sports complex for local benefit in the late 1980s. "There was no indoor space in East Herts for sports and I said I would get it." He badgered the right people, including local MP Bowen Wells, for the initial £350,000 to get things going. The first facility opened in 1989, which was enough to drive the initiative relentlessly forward.

As for his academic schoolwork: in fact, he did do enough to get to Loughborough Training College to become a PE and maths teacher, and then Director of Physical Education at Thames Polytechnic (now University of Greenwich) for 16 years until 1989. All this while achieving Olympic excellence and testing the offer from BBC's Rob Pickering to become a media sports commentator. And that is the point that comes over strongest in his HCS talk and Q&A session: no door on life's opportunities was ever closed completely.

As athletics commentator, he covered ten Summer Olympic Games from 1976 (many alongside the late David Coleman), twelve Athletics World Championships, ten European Championships and eight Commonwealth Games. As well as being Chairman of Wodson Park, he is a Patron of the children's medical research charity SPARKS, a member of the Variety Club, and the Chairman of the trustees of the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqvtwZ-NYOU>

Ian Nash

## Chalkstreams of Hertfordshire- Tim Hagyard

Britain's Victorian infrastructure of waterworks may be the world's finest but it has become a classic example of the best being the enemy of the good as we have to use top-quality drinking water to flush our loos, bathe and wash-up.

It is part of a web of problems that lead back to damaging depletion of precious rivers, not least the environmentally crucial chalk streams, of which England has 160 of the 200 in existence globally. And as Tim Hagyard, former planning officer at East Herts District Council, said in a talk to Hertford Civic Society, unweaving the web is far from simple. For example, when it comes to governments considering lowering standards for non-drinking purposes: "No grey water is allowed in the home for fear of contamination. Other European nations don't have this problem."

There are ways, however, to cut waste, cost and environmental damage, such as the Cambridge scheme, capturing run-off of rain into tanks for use in flushing toilets and watering the garden. It was one of a wide range of ideas and initiatives eloquently described in the talk by Tim, who is a former Planning Manager for the Campaign for Protection of Rural England (CPRE) - Hertfordshire.

His talk at the February HCS meeting drew on his latest book, *Chalk Stream Reflections*, the result of a 350-mile walk of Hertfordshire's chalk streams during the pandemic summer of 2020. In the book and talk, he takes us beyond the functional role of rivers as a resource to remind us why their preservation and improvement are key to the very survival and diversity of wildlife and a source of our physical and mental health as we walk and cycle the pathways they open up to us.

Over-extraction of water to feed wasteful industry and ill-thought-out housing development are among the issues he insists need addressing with urgency and he gives a clear idea of how we can all contribute in small ways to making big improvements in the way we use the precious water resources.

Ian Nash

## AGM PAPERS

### Agenda

1. Minutes of the AGM held on 28 June 2023
2. Report of the Committee for 2023
3. Hon Treasurer's Report and Accounts
4. Election of Officers
5. Election of Members of the Committee

Any other business

### Minutes of AGM 2023

*Apologies:* Dorothy AbelSmith, Trish and David Bidefeld, Ben Crystall, Don Gates, Michael Milbourn, Robert Tait Fairhead

*Minutes of the AGM held on June 28<sup>th</sup> 2022 and the Report of the Committee for 2022* were accepted.

*Hon Treasurer's Report and Accounts* were accepted.

*Election of Officers:* The following officers were elected. Chair - Malcolm Ramsay. Vice-chair - Milena Nuti. Treasurer - Geoffrey Rice

*Election of Members of the Committee:* The following were re-elected. Margaret Anthony, Terry Betts, Sue Jones, Milena Nuti, Malcolm Ramsay, Andrew Sangster, Anna Stanton, Richard Threlfall. *The following new members were elected.* Peter Godfrey, Jan Goodeve.

*Any other business:* There was no other business.

The current Officers and Committee are listed on p3 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.



## REPORT BY MAIN COMMITTEE OF HERTFORD CIVIC SOCIETY FOR 2023

### Talks for members

2023 was the first year when we reverted to holding talks face-to-face, rather than on Zoom. We were fortunate to be able to do this in the United Reformed Church in Cowbridge, a much more spacious setting than our previous venue. We needed to move as our old location was no longer available on Wednesday evenings. The four talks in 2023 were:

- Swifts in Hertford, by Clive Fleming, Hertford Swift Group (January)
- Garden design in a changing climate, by Simon Smith (March)
- Henry's VIII's children growing up in and around Hertford, by Clare Gittings (June/AGM)
- Stuart Storey's life - talk by the athlete and sports commentator (November)

If you missed any of these talks, the recordings can be found on our website. And, if you are able to recommend a high-quality talk by a local speaker (or by anyone with a local focus for their talk), please contact Malcolm Ramsay, events organiser.

### Community issues and campaigning

2023 saw plenty of campaigning. In particular:

Like many others we were shocked at plans for the abrupt closure of all ticket offices at train stations, including of course Hertford East and North. There was a public consultation in the summer. One of our members, Reg Harman, who is an expert transport planner, gave useful advice about the lack of any detailed planning for this proposed change. Also, we consulted you the members and found that you were strongly opposed. We not only submitted our critical comments to the official website but put together a letter published by the *Mercury* (31 August). Later in the year we were glad to learn that the Government had backed down on this issue, and had asked train companies to desist, following overwhelming public opposition.

Towards the end of 2023 we grappled with the complexities of the announcement by Hertfordshire Council that it was set on moving most of the staff working in County Hall to a more modern 'campus' in Stevenage. County Hall is apparently too costly to upgrade. Just the historic front part of the buildings, including the Council Chamber, would be retained by the County Council. The rest of the site is currently 'to dispose'.

This proposal only received the bare minimum of publicity from the County Council, so we wrote to the Leader of the Council, to request a meeting. We were accorded a



briefing by the officers charged with disposal of the site - at which we were able to ask questions.

Our note of the meeting, which has previously been circulated to members, was also distributed to several hundred addresses in the wider vicinity of County Hall, as the Council only sent a short letter to rather fewer, more obviously adjacent households. Where all of this leaves the site in future is unclear, and it may stay like that for some time. At least we have made it clear to the County Council that we will be taking a close interest in whatever happens next. See report p1.

One other community planning issue had major resonance: Durkan's proposal to build 118 dwellings on Bengeo Field. This iconic site, at the northern end of Bengeo, was previously in the Green Belt, and was only taken out of it to facilitate the excavation of gravel. That was stopped by the intense local opposition to the Bengeo quarry. But the site, HERT4, has still been designated for housing under the District Plan, as finalised in 2018. Once again, in 2023, there has understandably been tremendous local opposition over the same site, with over a thousand objections lodged against Durkan's application to build houses - an application still sitting with East Herts Council at the end of 2023. We sympathised strongly with the opposition, and agonised as to how we should respond (given the site's inclusion in the District Plan), so our response to East Herts Council simply highlighted two important but largely overlooked weaknesses, and suggested possible improvements. These were the need for most of the houses to depend on a pumping station to access mains drainage (which could result in leaks into the aquifer) and the lack of good-quality access to the site for pedestrians and cyclists.

## **Website development**

With our new website largely complete at the start of 2023, we focused on how best to manage the new website, which is more sophisticated than the old one. We asked you the members if any of you felt able to do this. Sadly, no volunteers stepped forward. We then searched for a locally-based professional, and initially had some useful but not ultimately fruitful discussions. By the end of the year, we had appointed Paul Stanton as our webmaster: he has also designed our new logo. We look forward to collaborating with Paul in future years.

## **A changing committee**

We continue to depend on volunteers both for our main committee and for most other tasks. In 2023, Hilary Durbin retired from the committee after many years of lively contributions as a community activist; while Mike Howarth also stepped down but has

continued to make recordings of talks to members, so that they can be put on the website. Mike worked as a webmaster when we had our previous website, a role for which we are particularly grateful.

Two new people joined the main committee in 2023: Jan Goodeve and Peter Godfrey. Both have plenty of experience of planning issues, and they take part in our planning group as well as the main committee.

There are still possible roles for others wanting to join the main committee and for volunteers for other, 'off-committee' tasks for specific purposes. For instance, is there anyone wanting to take occasional local photos? Or anyone who could get involved with our social events? Please think whether you or someone you know might be interested in helping our work for Hertford.

## **HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2023** (Registered charity number 266111)

The accounts for 2023, with the comparative figures for 2022, are set out below. The sources of income and the reasons for expenditure remain much as before. Membership subscriptions have declined a little. We have received ongoing support from The Hertfordshire Distillery Limited, based on the company's sales of Hertford gin. There were no social events but physical meetings resumed; we continue to subscribe to Zoom, inter alia for committee meetings. The fountain cost more, primarily because a new pump was required. The society pays annual subscriptions to Civic Voice and the CPRE (the latter just £36).

Interest income has risen substantially, reflecting a full year since the rise in interest rates from next to nothing to over 5% per annum. To help counter the effects of inflation and to secure some growth in income over the longer term, we moved £20,000 of the money in the COIF Charities Deposit Fund to the COIF Charities Investment Fund and expect to move as much again when the timing seems favourable.

The outcome for the year was a surplus of £4,238 (including an increase in the valuation of the new investment of £907) and funds carried forward of £90,410.

Our thanks to Paul Wernick who has reviewed the accounts in the role of honorary examiner.

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	31 December 2023 £	31 December 2022 £
<b>INCOME</b>			
Membership subscriptions and donations		1,410	1,512
Corporate donation: The Hertfordshire Distillery Limited		151	184
Social events		-	106
General meetings and lectures		46	-
Interest on deposits		3,571	1,036
Investment income	2	87	-
Recovery of Gift Aid		445	175
		<b>5,710</b>	<b>3,013</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
General meetings and lectures		258	112
Social events		-	56
Website		83	57
Insurance		129	205
Printing and stationery		42	-
Subscriptions and donations		484	478
Civic Activities: Fountain	4	1,383	291
		<b>2,379</b>	<b>1,199</b>
<b>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR before investment movements</b>		<b>3,331</b>	<b>1,814</b>
Increase in valuation of investments		907	-
<b>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR after investment movements</b>		<b>4,238</b>	<b>1,814</b>

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	31 December 2023 £	31 December 2022 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
Investments: COIF Charities Investment Fund	2	20,907	-
PA and projection equipment (cost £1,397, fully depreciated)		-	-
		<b>20,907</b>	-
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Debtors and prepayments		1,363	1,537
Cash at bank and on deposit	3	68,414	84,859

		<b>69,777</b>	<b>86,396</b>
less: creditors and accruals		<b>(274)</b>	<b>(224)</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		<b>69,503</b>	<b>86,172</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>90,410</b>	<b>86,172</b>
Accumulated Fund brought forward		<b>86,172</b>	<b>84,358</b>
Surplus for the year		<b>4,238</b>	<b>1,814</b>
<b>Accumulated Fund</b> carried forward		<b>90,410</b>	<b>86,172</b>

**NOTES:**

1. These accounts have been prepared on the accruals basis.
2. During the year the Society bought 1,053.5381 income units in the COIF Charities Investment Fund at a cost of £20,000. The valuation of the holding at 31 December 2023 was £20,907; the valuation may rise or fall according to daily market movements.
3. The cash at bank and on deposit comprises £67,289 in the COIF Charities Deposit Fund (2022: £83,707) and £1,125 at Barclays Bank (2022: £1,152).
4. The Society is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the fountain in Salisbury Square, Hertford.

**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 6 April 2024