



THE 'WITHOUT WHOM' AWARDS

In a burst of independent action that pushes the principle of the freedom of the press to the limits, the Editor of The Harpenden Society News has unilaterally determined to install a system of 'Without Whom' Awards. The recipients will be Society members who have rendered a service to the town on behalf of The Society 'without whom' it simply would not have happened. And here's two to set rolling the 'Without Whom' ball.

RON TAYLOR – The Society's Publicity Officer – and much else. He has transformed and extended the style and branding of every element of our presentation, including this very newsletter, and he has designed all our publications, leaflets, posters, everything. He is responsible for all the advertising and settings for our public meetings and allied events, including the spectacular success of our 'Celebration' style AGMs. He has worked hard to create and develop the construct of our highly impressive schools competition and he is the man who almost single-handedly has gathered together the town's retailers and encouraged them to be proactive with their Christmas publicity and to become involved with the imaginative and brilliantly presented Food Fair held at the same time as the Farmers' Market on Sunday 28 September and later on into the afternoon.

Ron Taylor – 'without whom' The Society would be a more drab, colourless, perfunctory agency.



LIZ TROUNCE – The convenor of our marvellous band of doughty volunteers who staff Library Express every Wednesday afternoon and early evening. Liz recruited, helped induct and train the volunteers, supervises all their endeavours and arranges the roster, is on hand to deal with emergencies and generally ensures that this innovatory activity actually works. This is a simple and straightforward accolade for a modest but highly capable operator..

Liz Trounce – 'without whom' Harpenden Library would be closed on Wednesday afternoon and early evenings..

Were musical terminology to be applied to these two stalwarts by way of characterisation, one would be vivace and the other penseroso. Both are obbligato.

Our heartiest thanks to both these 'Without Whom' winners.

CAMPAIGNING FUND

A sincere word of appreciation to all those members who generously donated to Chris Marsden's letter of appeal for extra funds to campaign on your behalf and for all those living now and in years to come in Harpenden.

So far we have raised some £1650 which will be put to good use.

It occurs to us that some of you probably thought 'I must donate to that campaigning fund' and then, a visitor knocked at the door, the telephone rang, there was an exciting programme starting on the telly, it somehow slipped your memory.

Don't worry. Just do it now:

Cheques payable to The Harpenden Society sent to our treasurer Harry Downie 66 Eastmoor park, Harpenden AL5 1BW

or by bank transfer; The Harpenden Society's bank account is with the Nat West Bank, Harpenden; account number 28772946; sort code 60-10-07

Come on; Let's make it £3000

REMEMBER WE ARE A CHARITY; NO 278154 GIVE GENEROUSLY

The Harpenden in Question

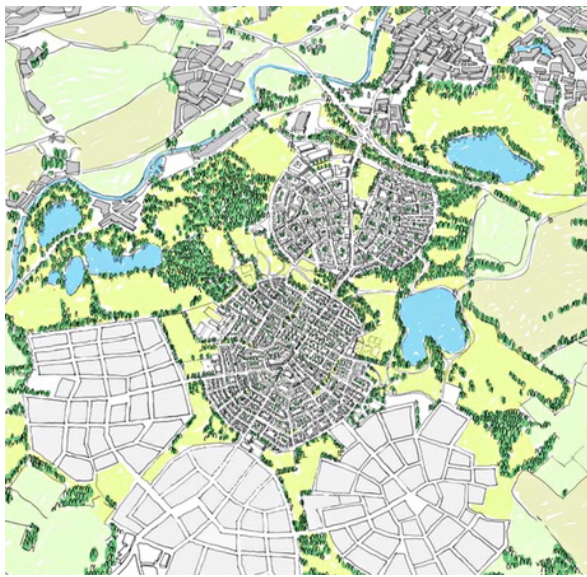
being a series of editorial commentaries on important Harpenden issues that should challenge thought and encourage inquiry and action.

15. Time for Boldness



At last. A grown-up plan to resolve the major part of the housing crisis. It comes from David Rudkin, winner of the prestigious Wolfson Prize, second only to the Nobel Prize for economics.

One of the most depressing aspects of the current conflict over where to build houses is the knowledge that thousands of towns all over the United Kingdom are struggling with ill thought-out, petty schemes to stick a few scores of houses here and there, scrabbling away at the 'green' edges and 'brown' innards of settlements, causing friction everywhere with hardly a mention of infrastructure or job opportunities and unbalancing the functional ecology of all these places in the process.



Shown here is the fictional town called Uxchester to develop David Rudkin's concept as it would apply to Oxford

The rag-bag idea that you can solve the housing crisis by littering everywhere with scruffy batches of houses is like if in 1939 all the evacuees had been distributed at random all over the nation including the places most likely to be bombed.

David Rudkin offers the courageous and challenging concept of forty 'garden cities', taking what he calls 'a confident bite' out of the available land. But rather than isolate them completely, as sadly happened with some local authority estates in the 1960s and 1970s, he envisages the modern garden city as the 'extension' apart from but close to an existing thriving town, linked to it by fast transit bus and tramway systems. Among the forty sites he lists Oxford, Preston, Carlisle, Bristol, Guildford, Exeter, Harrogate, Stratford-on-Avon, Norwich and Reading, an eclectic roster both geographically and socially, with community backing for the scheme one of the conditions.

Each would be comprised of 86,000 units, with one in five affordable or self-build, with walkable neighbourhoods, 'green' values uppermost and with, of course, schools, shops, businesses and other employment opportunities. Moreover, the traditional

'garden city' principle, laid down by Ebenezer Howard, creator of Letchworth Garden City in 1898 would appertain – the increased land values would be ploughed back into community resources and amenities. David Rudkin proposes a rolling 30 or 35 year programme of 3.5m new homes accommodating up to 6m people.

It has been pointed out that over the last decade the governmental housing targets were missed by as many as 954,000 houses. It really does need something of this vision and boldness to resolve the crisis – and an associate poll shows that 74% of people are in favour and only 13% against the 'Garden City' solution.

Happily, the Town and Country Planning Association, founded by Ebenezer Howard himself, has thrown itself enthusiastically behind this valiant proposal. Town AND Country, mark you; no driving of wedges between artificial sectors – and they have warned the government about 'badging' projects as 'garden cities' when they are not. With regard to the Ebbsfleet, Kent development, Kate Henderson, the forward-thinking young CEO of the TCPA, has judged that, without, for instance, the transfer of increased value to the community, this is NOT a garden city.

Predictably, the Campaign to Protect Rural England objects noisily to David Rudkin's imaginative plan. He probably breathed a sigh of relief and thought 'I must be on the right lines'. With their unspoken mantra of 'grass before people' and their wish to cram ever more people into overcrowded, confined towns, CPRE have allowed the pastoral fallacy to delude them completely.

Let us print the critical figures once again, utilising the 2012 UK National Eco-System Assessment. Only '6.8% of the UK's land area is now classified as urban'; just to be on the safe side, that includes buildings in rural areas. Because of the enormous amount of this urban area that is parks and gardens and so on, only 2.27% of the whole landscape is actually built on. And, of course, the urban districts cater for well over 90% of the population. At a rough estimate forty new Garden Cities would bring that 2.27% up to maybe 2.4% and the designated urban area up from 6.8% to perhaps 6.9%. Either way it still leaves CPRE and other backwoodsmen opponents of the proposal well over 90% of our green and pleasant land to fret over.

It would be wonderful if, all over the country, all those equivalents of the Harpenden Green Belt Association were telling the politicians 'stop tinkering and fidgeting timidly round the edges and destabilising hundreds of communities; it's a time for boldness'.

Eric Midwinter

Volunteering Harpenden

What an outcome! The Society's public meeting on Thursday 25 September offered an opportunity to several of Harpenden's voluntary organisations to inform a general gathering about their activities.

That exercise in itself was well-received but it led to the proposal from the meeting that The Harpenden Society should act as the focus for a closer and more unified approach. This was agreed and a smaller working group, led by Society Chairman Chris Marsden was quickly formed to plan ahead. Ideas suggested include a joint website linked to The Society's website and a bright and breezy stall at each of the monthly Farmers' Markets starting early 2015.

The provisional title for this new body is 'Volunteering Harpenden', the suggestion of County Councillor Teresa Heritage who is a keen supporter of this initiative. It was good to see the co-operative spirit alive and well. In volunteering, as in life, you can get much more done by working heartily together than by steering a lonesome path.

Here is the list of the pioneering First XV, the organisations that began this welcome project. Long may they reign and in ever larger numbers:
The Harpenden Society;
Harpenden Helping Hand;
Harpenden Scouts;
Harpenden and District Local History Society;
Probus Club of Harpenden;
Neighbourhood Watch;
Computer Friendly;
The Harpenden Trust;
Harpenden Village Rotary;
Harpenden Village Inner Wheel;
Luton, South Beds and Harpenden Samaritans;
Harpenden Seniors Forum;
Harpenden Lions;
Harpenden Parents Group;
Harpenden Film Society.



Memos from Members

What one of our correspondents John Kneale termed our **'tabloid scare presentation'** on the housing crisis (but he confessed to enjoying it) evoked several vigorous responses by letter and email. John went on to draw especial attention to the **'shortage of affordable and available homes for the less well-off'**, some of whom have **'been forced out of Harpenden'** and he did find **'the usual incantation of the holy Green Belt mantra'**, on the whole **'depressing'**.

Then there was Robert Hill – **'from my eyrie on East Common I do not feel threatened'** – but he did enter a strenuous attack on our 'Infrastructure Inspected' column, levelling seven challenging queries on that subject.

David Cumming raised several telling points and concluded **'whilst Harpenden residents may wish to fight any expansion into the Green belt, I think we should in fact be looking to see where we can identify areas of Green Belt that can be released with least impact. Otherwise I suppose the inevitable pressure will have to be confronted in a five-ten year time scale and we could end up with a short-term fix.'**

Finally, Bryan Fewell performed a noble civic duty in checking that the costly **'Housing Needs Assessment Report'** had been properly and legally obtained via tenders and council approval. As he says, **'it's always worth asking the question to keep these characters on their toes.'**

And the fact that it was all above board fails to explain the excessive cost – over £40,000 – for what turned out to be a mediocre piece of work that was scarcely value for all that money.

Memos for Members

**Don't miss our Christmas meeting
8.0 p.m Thursday 11 December
at Park Hall, Leyton Road.**

From 7.30 pm mulled wine and mince pies will be served by way of festive treat before....
...the environmental treat of a presentation on and discussion of **PARK LIFE in ROTHAMSTED**.
A new look play area, new landscaping, and a community orchard PLUS 'rooms with a view' at the James Marshall redevelopment and even a public cafe.

A summer evening with Annabels

Penny Ayres tells us what a marvellous Summer Outing was enjoyed at Annables Farm on 25 June 2014. On a lovely summer evening, 40 Harpenden Society members gathered at Annables Farm which has recently been renovated to create a hi-tech learning centre together with a kitchen and other up to date facilities.

After a welcoming cup of tea or coffee Ian Pigott, the farmer and owner, gave us a presentation in which he explained about his 'Farmschool' where he welcomes adults and children from 'town' backgrounds to explain modern farming practices and the source of our food. On his farm he grows wheat, barley, linseed and oilseed rape - and more. He has no livestock. We then had a ride on a tractor with a trailer to see the farm and were given an interesting commentary on the fields and countryside which we passed. Members showed their interest with a wide variety of questions which Ian was pleased to answer.

We then came back to the farm where we enjoyed some excellent wine and nibbles - and a fine time was had by all.



Crime fighting tips

Alan Jackson, Convenor of our Public Order Working Group, assiduously collects the latest information to help householders protect themselves more readily against petty crimes.

Bicycles

Throughout the St Albans district bikes have been taken from garden sheds or where they have been left unattended. Use a solid steel 'D-shaped' shackle and fasten your bike to something solid such as railings or a lamp-post, preferably in a public area. Record your bike's serial number and mark it with your postcode

Harpenden and the housing crisis

The likely effect of the national housing crisis on Harpenden causes all serious minded citizens furiously to think. The furrowed brow rather than the cheery grin was thus the main feature on the countenance of the audience that attended The Harpenden Society hosting of a meeting to discuss this subject. Over 300 people crammed into the public hall on Monday 20 October to listen attentively to a long explanation by Councillor Julian Daly, leader of the St Albans and District Council and its planning portfolio holder, on why it is being proposed in the draft Strategic Plan to build 9000 housing units in the district over the next twenty years, 5000 on brown field sites and 4000 on green belt locations. It amounts to an average of 436 new homes every year. Councillor Daly was accompanied by Chris Briggs, a senior council officer.

For fully an hour and a half under the expert and fair-minded control of The Society's chairman, Chris Marsden, members of the audience raised a battery of wide-ranging questions and comments, from the knotty legal, technical and demographic intricacies to more heartfelt pleas about the town's capacity to cope with so heavy a building programme. Appropriate to the mood of the evening these points were made quietly, courteously and without rancour. Councillor Daly replied in like tones, although there was a derisory and incredulous flavour about the reaction to his assertion that the traffic on the main road through Harpenden had slackened of late. However, as Councillor Daly constantly reiterated, the draft plan may only be amended by the provision of strong evidence, not anecdotal or emotional sentiment.

And this the Chairman of The Society promised to do.

Helping the Police

If you want to help the Police solve local crime by identifying wanted persons for them there's a 'Facewatch' app to help you. Hertfordshire Police use it. You can also find the images on your PC at www.facewatchid.info. You can use these facilities without registering or giving personal details.

Avoiding the Scammers

If you want to minimise your problems with scammers and nuisance calls you may want to use the Telephone Preference Service or the Mail Preference Service. Both services are free, but you may be approached by people trying to charge you for registering with them. If you are, it's a scam - say 'no'! On the other hand, there are call blocker devices on the market that may help you. Don't buy one without first looking at customer reviews!

Please send comments on any issue raised in this edition to the editor:

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Visit the Society's website -

www.harpendensociety.org

Designed by Ron Taylor

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hard-working
Society members.

Busy, busy; The Society news in snippets

LIB VOLS-- the Library Express service on Wednesday afternoons and early evenings continues to be delivered by the brave band of Society volunteers, with some reinforcements from the appeal in the last newsletter.



SENIOR FAIR – The Society was again represented on 2 October at the bustling Senior Forum's annual fair, (below) where our stall was visited by many interested in The Society's widening range of interests and concerns.



ARTS HUB – The Society, with Rachel Tuckley of The Society's Education and Leisure Working Group especially prominent, is involved in the government 'Our Place' scheme, whereby a local steering group are aiming to develop an arts, culture and heritage 'hub' in the town. This is one feature to keep an eye on.

SCHOOL COMP – The Education and Leisure Working Group are pleased to announce the theme of this our third annual creative arts competition for primary schools: it is 'Forward to the Future...Harpenden 2100'.



HOUSE ALARM – This edition is too late to cover the detail of the 'Housing Alarm' meeting arranged by The Society at the public halls on 20 October. **However you can read a short review on page four.**



CARE DATA – For those who missed the 'Health Matters' meeting on 6 November and who are keen to find out more about the for and againsts of the proposed transfer of all patients' records to a central data base, John Wigley, Chairman of the St Albans and Harpenden Patient Group has kindly provided these links. Google 'Care.data' and go to <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive2014-02/07/a-simple-guide-to-care-data>

RED HOUSE – The Red House Forum met on 8 October to receive an update from the Hertfordshire NHS Community Trust (HCT). It has been accepted by HCT that Harpenden needs to have services developed in the town as part of an 'Estates Strategy' covering some 60 properties across the county owned or rented by HCT. The 'Estates Strategy' will be considered by the HCT Board in November and the Red House Forum will meet thereafter to receive the verdict. Although Red House Forum members are disturbed by the extension of time in terms of this project, HCT officers remain positive about the outcome.



New face on the subs bench

For non-football fans that means that, thankfully, we have a new Membership Secretary in Susan Vinther. Susan moved to Harpenden from Cambridge in 1996 with husband Sven and finds it a wonderful place to live and bring up their two teenage daughters. The whole family makes the most of the various leisure activities on offer in the town (sporting, scouting and cultural) and the dog loves his walks on the Common or along one of the many attractive paths. A teacher of German, Susan has been closely involved with the Friends of Alzey for many years and now looks forward to getting to know the members of the Harpenden Society and working with the team of newsletter distributors.



....and, by way of welcome to Susan,(above) why not gladden her heart by responding to this message about subscriptions.

Last year at this time we informed you of our decision to increase subscriptions from January 2014, the first such increase since 1996. Thank you to all members who have paid the minimum suggested new amount of £8 for an individual and £10 for a family. Many standing orders still need to be changed; a large number came in to us at the old amounts. If you have not yet got around to making out a new standing order and paid no additional sum in 2014, then can we politely suggest that now is the time to take action and remedy the situation before January 2015. We would be very grateful for a cheque or transfer for the amount due for this year (the old rate was £4 individual, £5 family) and to receive a new standing order form, which automatically cancels the previous order.

Membership forms and payment facilities can be found on the website www.harpendensociety.org. Harry Downie, Treasurer (tel 762259) and Susan Vinther (tel 622816), new Membership Secretary, will be happy to provide forms and answer any queries.

The Harpenden Society AWARDS 2014

We need your help in identifying the best of the new in Harpenden so that we can recognise what is worthy of an award. Please let us know of any new building, developments or facilities completed in 2014 that you believe are worthy of an award.

The premier award is a Plaque for outstanding projects and for the year 2013 this was awarded to Harpenden Common Golf Club for their new clubhouse.



Other projects may be given a Certificate of Merit or a Letter of Commendation.

Please complete either or both these nomination sections below:

I wish to nominate the following for the 2014 Harpenden Society Plaque:

.....

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.....

I wish to nominate the following for a 2014 Harpenden Society Certificate of Merit

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Please email to 'awards@harpendensociety.org' or post to: Penny Ayres, Kinsbourne House, Kinsbourne Green, Harpenden AL5 3PE.

OR Go to the Society web site:
www.harpendensociety.org

Our Awards Committee will visit and examine all nominations and select the winners. These will be announced at the AGM and in the Newsletter