

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY

Minutes of a meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday,
27 January, 1981 at 7.45 pm at Harpenden Hall

Present: Mr. Usher in the chair
Mr. Evans, Mr. Ward, Mr. Powlesland, Miss Ashford,
Lady Bawden, Mr. Bush, Mrs. Godfrey, Miss Haberer,
Mr. Jennings, Mr. Raw, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Suitters, Mrs. Wang
Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Haggard,
Mr. Rees and Mr. Wilson

1. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December were approved and signed.

2. MATTERS ARISING

The metal plaques designed by Mr. Usher for the concourse tree and the trees donated by Blue Arrow Travel were exhibited. They needed to be fixed to suitable stakes, and it was agreed that the Secretary should approach the Pensioners' Workshop to ask if they could help with the work.

Mr. Ward reported that it had not been possible to arrange a meeting with Mr. Saunders of British Rail in January, but he would now try to arrange a meeting on 12 or 17 February.

3. 1981 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The form of the Annual General Meeting on 9 March, 1981 was discussed. Miss Haberer felt that the meeting should not be restricted to business, and the Committee agreed with Mrs. Wang's suggestion that the photographs for the proposed picture postcards should be exhibited and voted on at the meeting. The result of the Society's Award for 1981 would also be announced.

The Secretary suggested two resolutions for changes in the Society's constitution:-

1. That the appointment of a Vice-Chairman should take place annually by election.
2. That the annual subscription from January, 1982 should be raised to £2 for families and £1 for single membership.

The Committee approved both resolutions, which would be put to the Annual General Meeting.

Nominations for Committee members were still needed as five members would retire under the three-year rule.

1981 AWARD

It was agreed that a panel consisting of Miss Haberer, Mr. Usher and Mr. Wilson would consider nominations for the award, which would be judged on 28 February. Mr. Curl would also be invited to join the panel.

NEWSLETTER

The chairman congratulated Miss Haberer on the January Newsletter.

6. MEMBERSHIP AND FUNDS

The Treasurer reported that the Society's finances had benefited this year from the interest gained on the money donated for trees, but an increase in the annual subscription was necessary. Subscriptions were coming in well and about half were now paid by Banker's Orders.

7. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Lady Bawden reported on arrangements for the meeting being organised by the Commons Group on 10 February and suggested that a walk over the Common should be organised later in the year.

Miss Haberer said she had approached Mr. Bernard Gray as a speaker for a future meeting. He would be willing to give a talk on "Harpenden and the micro-chip".

Mr. Bush reported that he had provisionally booked the Public Hall on the following dates:-

Wednesday, 23 September, 1981	Public Meeting
Monday, 26, October, 1981	" "
Wednesday, 9, December, 1981	" " (Pies and Punch)
" 3 February, 1982	" "
" 3 March, 1982	Annual General Meeting
" 5 May, 1982	Cheese and Wine Party

The Committee agreed that the bookings should be confirmed.

It was agreed that a Sub-Committee consisting of Mr. Ward, Mr. Usher and Mr. Bush should meet on Tuesday, 3 February to discuss the arrangements for the Spotlight on Leisure Exhibition on 26/28 March.

8. REPORTS OF GROUP CONVENORS

(a) PLANS

Mr. Smith reported that an application had been made to increase by nine the number of industrial units, with car parking, etc. at Batford Mill. A previous application for further units had been refused, and the Committee agreed that objection should again be made to further expansion.

(b) TRANSPORT

Mr. Raw reported that the Group had met on 6 January. The main concern had been with traffic arrangements at Southdown, and the Committee agreed that when the new Committee was elected, a Group should be formed to consider an overall plan for the area. Mr. Jennings agreed to lead the Group.

Lady Bawden drew the attention of the Committee to the dangers for pedestrians in crossing from Southdown Road near the Moat House to the footpath on the old Bull Road. Members agreed to inspect it with a view to making recommendations for improvement.

c) UPPER LEA VALLEY GROUP

Mrs. Wang reported that the old railway track had now been cleared from Westfield Road to the National Childrens' Home land.

d) COMMONS GROUP

Lady Bawden commented on the lack of trees along the Jockey Meadow

- 8(d) boundary to the Common. Those planted by the District Council had unfortunately died and it was agreed that Mr. Arnold should be reminded of the need to replace them.

9. SECRETARY'S CORRESPONDENCE

The Secretary had received a reply from Hubdean Ltd., giving particulars of their anti-graffito device, which he exhibited.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Powlesland reported that the District Council would undertake to maintain flowering baskets in the High Street if sufficient sponsors came forward to provide them. The Society had agreed to contribute and Lady Bawden suggested that the Harpenden Horticultural Society be approached to support the scheme. She and Mr. Powlesland agreed to make further enquiries.

Lady Bawden expressed concern at the condition of St. Nicholas Church yard. Mr. Smith said the Church Committee had been in touch with the local authorities, responsibilities had been qualified and schemes prepared to tidy up the churchyard. He was asked to convey to the Church Committee the Society's interest and support.

Mrs. Wang reported on the dangerous conditions in frosty weather caused by flooding at the junction of Carlton Road and Sun Lane. She had approached the ~~Town~~ ^{District} Council, but no action had been taken. The Secretary said he had had photographs taken with a view to showing them at the Spotlight on Leisure Exhibition.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday, 17th February at 7.45 p.m. at Harpenden Hall.

Paul Vane.
17/2/81

REPORT ON MEETING HELD AT HARPENDEN STATION ON TUESDAY, 17th FEBRUARY, 1981

Present:- Mr. Sanders, British Rail. Mr. J. Fryd, Town Clerk,
Representatives of the Harpenden Society:- Mr. P. Usher, Chairman,
Mr. T. Ward, Secretary, Mr. B Rees and Mrs. L. Wang.

STATION BUILDINGS

The dilapidated condition of the once-attractive Victorian station buildings was pointed out by the deputation. Little, if any repair or maintenance has been carried out since the early 70s, with the result that windows are boarded up, woodwork is rotting, plaster, paint and stonework is crumbling. An air of general neglect includes a lack of regular 'housekeeping', resulting in dirty windows and plastic glazed sections of the platform shelters. Piles of rubbish remain untouched, and fencing everywhere is in disrepair. The whole station area is therefore a very depressing sight.

Stationmaster's House - Station Approach

The house, grounds and boundary fencing of this property has been similarly neglected, even though it is used by a commercial enterprise. As this property's future is not affected by a new station, there should be a legal obligation to abide by minimum standards of upkeep and maintenance.

Mr. Sanders stated he would contact British Rail Property Board to make enquiries.

FUTURE PLANS FOR HARPENDEN STATION

The news that no repair, restoration or maintenance work on the old station building is envisaged, either now, or in the future, was received with dismay, as it is obvious that no new station is likely to materialise for many years.

The new footbridge, now being constructed, will be completed in May, and is welcomed.

The removal of all the old buildings and facilities on Platform I, including the present waiting room and overhead canopy are to be replaced only with a 'small' canopy and prefabricated waiting room of similar dimensions to the old one. This will not cater adequately for the large number of passengers requiring shelter.

Neither will the 4 box-like plastic-glazed shelters planned for re-erection on the island platform be welcomed. These have proved unpopular in the past with waiting passengers, for not only are they inadequate and impracticable, but also unsightly. The transparent plastic surfaces become quickly obscured with grime and scratches.

Mr. Rees recommended investigation into alternative shelter used at Heathrow Airport. The canopy-like shelters at the bus station there would be cheaper and better - designed alternatives.

CARLTON ROAD FOOTBRIDGE

The deputation was critical of the smooth, light grey-painted surfaces of the steel sides of the footbridge. These attracted the attention of local graffiti-mongers immediately the footbridge had been rebuilt. Obscene writings and drawings now cover the full length of this bridge, and are an affront to pedestrians of all ages who need to use this route.

Mr. Usher, himself a designer, suggested that B.R. could have incorporated a mesh 'facing' to the smooth panels, which would effectively deter graphic vandals, and also break up the monotony of a long gangway of unbroken surfaces.

TREE MANAGEMENT

The indiscriminate felling of trees was commented on. Mr. Sanders explained the reasons for adequate clearance of overhead cables, and the need also to lop the branches of mature trees overhanging embankment boundaries. The deputation nevertheless felt that a more sensitive approach to tree management was required, and local knowledge by B.R. was important, especially where screening of the now obtrusive gantries and overhead cables was desirable. There were many wider stretches of rail embankment where regular trimming of existing shrubs and trees would comply with safety regulation, without wholesale initial felling. The cost of regular control between the two methods would differ little, if at all.

Another example of indiscriminate 'blanket' felling occurred about two years ago of a B.R.-owned bank of mixed, mature trees adjacent to Harpenden station forecourt. Apparently the trees had blocked out light from an office block completed two years previously. These had been built, however, in the full knowledge of the existing bank of 60 year-old, or more, trees. There was no reason why trees at the top of the bank, about 20' away from the offices should also have been felled. It is ironic that a dense hedge of cupressus trees has now been planted against the boundary fence at the top of the bank which will, in a few years' time, block out more light from the offices than would a few carefully selected mature trees.

These are examples of important environmental changes taking place which could have been softened by a more sympathetic, sensitive and locally knowledgeable approach.

WORK SCHEDULE - 1981 and 1982

Mr. Sanders read out details of the time schedules for alterations to the station, from the opening of the footbridge to the raising of the platforms etc. It was hoped that by ~~reducing~~ raising the half width of Platform 4, which would result in a slope towards the old station building, it would not suffer from flooding due to inadequate drainage. Mr. Sanders also mentioned the possibility of the old booking hall, damaged by fire some years ago, being refurbished, but nothing definite was promised.

CONCLUSIONS - Harpenden Station area.

The deputation felt that the special difficulties of access to the proposed new station had not been fully appreciated by B.R., nor the need combine this as an integral part of any plans for a new station. It was the problems of access which had caused the delays which, to everyone's regret, has now resulted in the indefinite postponement of the rebuilding of Harpenden station. Thousands of regular commuters, as well as less regular travellers, are now being forced to accept sub-standard facilities offered by 'temporary' prefabricated erections, and crumbling Victorian ruins. The present state of deliberate neglect only encourages further neglect, abuse, and vandalism. These conditions also deter the station staff from maintaining an acceptable standard of 'housekeeping', as their morale, too, must be affected by the conditions in which they are working.

The deputation cannot therefore accept the present policy of deliberate neglect and urges B.R. to give serious consideration to more positive attitudes and action. As owners of land and property B.R. has a duty and obligation to find the means to keep them in good order.

Report submitted by Lorna Wang,
16, Ox Lane, Harpenden.

'NICKY' LINE

When questioned about its future, Mr Sanders stated it was not part of an operating sphere, and no longer required for railway use. Litigation between British Railway Property Board and Hemelite is at present taking place. If the railway track is put on the market, Local Authorities will have the opportunity of purchase.