

History

*1930 The Harpenden and District Preservation Society was formed in February 1930. Its aims, as set out in the Constitution, were: 'To safeguard the amenities of Harpenden and its environs, and to do everything possible to preserve and enhance its beauty for our own and future generations. With this purpose it will give special attention to zoning and open spaces, to roads, footpaths and rights of way, and to the prevention of disfigurement caused by ill-placed advertisements, by the unnecessary destruction of trees, and by smoke and other nuisances. The society will also devote special care to the preservation of buildings of architectural and historic value, to building development and to the melioration of such conditions as now tend to detract from the amenities of the locality'

*1932. Passing of the Town and Country Planning Act provided some protection for the centre of Harpenden.

*1933 November. A resolution to adopt a scheme embracing those parts of Harpenden excluded from the first Town Planning Scheme was passed by the Urban District Council - 'much to the satisfaction of the society'

*1933 the society undertook the planting of trees as an annual feature of its work. Permission was obtained for this to be done on Harpenden Common and on the 'roadside wastes' along Luton road. The first planting consisted of four trees in the Baa Lamb Trees group and five near the Railway Hotel (now the Harpenden Arms) on 16 February. The work of preparing the ground and the actual planting was carried out by Harpenden unemployed men, by arrangement with the Unemployed Centre.

*1937 2 March AGM of society. talk by the secretary of The Herts Society on a scheme for the supervision of building plans

*1937 5 June Sign unveiled by Lord Brocket on the site of Bennett's Butts, where compulsory archery was practised in the past

*1940 719 evacuee children in Harpenden. Village sign vandalised

*1946 November the society widened its aims and changed its name to the Harpenden Society at a revival meeting. Quote from 1947 Annual Report: 'After WW2 the society resumed its normal activities with a Special general Meeting at which the name of the society was changed...and the constitution was altered to include the aim 'the promotion of the general well-being of the people of Harpenden and its environs'

*1947 Harpenden Society Open Meeting (26 May) at Lourdes Hall Addressed by Mr FJ Osborn, chairman of the Town & County Planning Association on 'New Towns in an old County'

*1950 A meeting under the auspices of the Harpenden society was held in the Public hall. Inter alia one speaker said: 'Years ago Harpenden High Street had been described as the most beautiful High Street in England but such a description could not be applied to it now'.

Another speaker: 'This body is here for the creation of public opinion. it possesses no statutory powers but all great reforms have been brought about by public opinion.'

Population in 1950 15,000

*1950 March Desputation from the society to the UDC on the Sun Lane widening scheme

*1961 Subscription (minimum) 2/6d (12.5 p) 200 members

*1970 population 21,000 plus the County Council intend to limit it to 26,000 'In resisting the spread of residential building into the surrounding countryside, they have the support of the Harpenden Society and of all residents who appreciate the character of the town and its

natural features'

(minimum annual subscription 5s (25p))

*1978 First mention I can find of the Harpenden Society award - plaque won by developers and architects responsible for 66/72 High Street, on wall of estate agents John D Wood*1979 January Newsletter 'The success and effectiveness of the society is completely dependent on the number of ACTIVWE members.... YOUR help is desperately needed'

*1980 Vain appeal against 'For sale' boards on private properties, initiated by Connells. Croudance development (???) Appeals against this sent to the Minister for the Environment under the names of the Harpenden Society and the East Common Residents' Association

*1982 Newsletter Society's action against British Rail proposal to demolish most of the old station building in station approach Applications pouring in to develop Anskombes, Harpenden Lodge, the old Nursery School site and Akrill House.

*1983 The society supported a 'Keep Harpenden tidy' campaign, in conjunction with the Councils.

A founder member of the society, Captain KH Bond MC "A watchdog with no teeth must seem to be a big dog and have a loud bark. It is members not money that we want'

Keith Jennings: harpenden herald, 17 Sept 1987 (chairman of the society)

"We have been active in harpenden for over 50 years. We have achieved a great deal and in that time we have sought to preserve what is good in Harpenden and encourage sensible development. As a society, with 1,200 members, we will continue to be active for at least another 50 years....because, and let there be no doubt, as far as development goes in Harpenden the battle is just beginning.' Newsletter October 1987

'How does a voluntary society, with no executive powers, further its aims of keeping Harpenden a good place in which to live? Firstly, by seeking to understand the issues thrust upon it (and on its elected representatives) by mounting population pressures in the South-East in general and Hertfordshire in particular.Harpenden's best defence is informed public opinion. We shall do our best, but we need your help. Our influence gains in strength with increased membership, so we need recruits.' Newsletter Jan 1989