



Looking back - Looking forward How we celebrated at 'Celebration 2013'

The jaunty music of the Sir John Lawes school jazz band welcomed and the soul music of the April Blue duo bid farewell to the hundred and thirty members and friends who packed the annex of the Harpenden House Hotel on the evening of Thursday 11 April.



The Harpenden Society, eschewing the glum routine of the conventional annual general meeting, opted to celebrate in style, with a modish pictorial display of its year's achievements and the chance for members and friends to chat informally with The Society officers and committee members. Posters and leaflets proclaimed the four 'Big Issues' which The Society is currently pursuing, namely the revival of the Red House, the renewal of the public halls, the refurbishment, complete with cafe, of Rothamsted Park and the regeneration of the high street.



Above top: Sir John Lawes school jazz band welcomed members and guests. Above: Blues duo 'April Blue' concluded the event

The formal annual general meeting business was expeditiously dispatched by President Alison Steer and Chairman Chris Marsden. The Society's well-supported competition for primary schools was profiled (details on pages 3 & 4) and the winners of The Harpenden Society Awards 'for projects that have added special appeal or value to the town's environment' were announced. (details on page 6) The Society's energetic public relations officer, Ron Taylor who was largely responsible for the evening's successful format launched a 'Double the Membership' drive (details on page 6)



Above: A packed audience listened intently to the proceedings

As the evening drew to a close, there were many expressions of genuine appreciation offered and throughout the event there was a constant buzz of congenial and responsive enjoyment.

Said Chris Marsden, '*we have a number of exciting projects under way and I am looking forward with enthusiasm to taking them forward in the next year. It is great that this meeting has given the opportunity to so many of our members and others to talk to us about what we are doing and for the meeting formally to have given its unanimous support for the continuation of our work.*'

Editor's note: it will have particularly pleased both President and Chairman that members of the audience both proposed doubling the membership subscription and also dealt vigorously with the only 'noisy neighbour' to attempt irrelevant interruption.

The Harpenden in Question

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

9. Lament for Local Government



How many of Britain's fifty and more prime ministers had substantial local government experience? Only two – Clement Attlee and John Major. Only two very senior British politicians had previously enjoyed really high-ranking local government success – Joseph Chamberlain as an outstanding mayor of Birmingham and Herbert Morrison as a most effective supremo of the London County Council.

Does this curious lack of connection between central and local politics go some way to explaining why, over the last 60 or 70 years there has been a gradual diminishing of the powers of local government?

There has been a significant expansion since 1939 of centralisation, with governments of all colours claiming command over or removing tasks previously allocated to local government. The workable 19th century balance of the central state laying down a frame of reference and local elected authorities making appropriate neighbourhood decisions endured for some hundred years. Older, well, alright then, very old readers may recall a time when 'municipalisation' had established and then controlled gas, water, buses, hospitals, substantial housing and many other services – and if you had a complaint you had a local councillor to ear-bash.

Education is an example of localism in decline. The dictates of a national curriculum, plus a strait-jacketing inspectorial and testing regime, and a massive increase in the number of schools directly funded from Whitehall has seriously weakened the hands of local education authorities.

Other local services now have, by governmental decree, a commercial base. Yet, for example, in the generation since municipal bus services were abandoned, bus usage has more than halved and bus fares have, in real value, more than doubled, except in London where, under a reformed system of local authority tendering, it has – 90,000 passengers a day - thrived.

Another aspect has been that of 'rationalisation', whereby local government units have grown in size and thus lost touch with local opinion and influence. In April the new Chief Constable of 'Police Scotland' – shouldn't we find a continental style national police a bit scary? - created by the amalgamation of the existing eight forces, advised the 43 forces of England and Wales to do something

similar. He might not be aware that in 1939 there were 183 police forces in England and Wales, each with its own local supervision, employing 60,000 police officers, whereas the 'merged' 43 of today have 140,000 officers. So much for rationalisation.

It used to be said that one paid taxes in sorrow and rates in anger, but, nowadays, less than 15% of revenue is collected locally...he who pays the piper... and, sadly, local voting turn-out has dropped drastically. Yet it is an accepted axiom of consumer representation that the closer the degree of local oversight to the source of provision, the likelier it is to be effective.

Within the last few weeks there have been two encouraging national polls. In one 49% of respondents were opposed to the concept of utilities – gas, electricity, water etc – being so unaccountable to public supervision. In another, asked who they trusted to educate their children, 59% of parents said headteachers, 16% said the local education authority, 13% said school governors and only 6% central government and academy chains.

Should all this be a cause of genuine concern to all who value the strength of the civic community? Let me be clear that this is an entirely personal if gloomy commentary. Others may feel just as strongly that the local elective process became clumsily old-fashioned and what has happened has been progressive and modernising. I hope they will write and tell me so. But we should acknowledge that a very major change has occurred in the post-war decades, so gradual almost to have passed unnoticed.

Eric Midwinter

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Visit the Society's website –
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'What do I like about Harpenden'

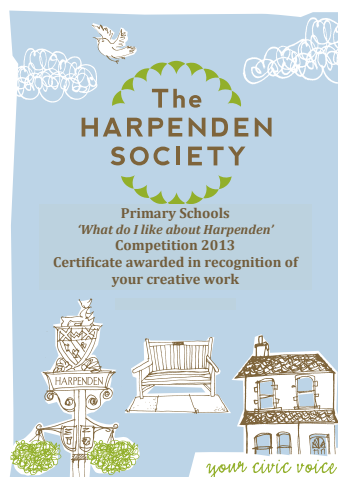
The Harpenden Society Primary Schools Competition

The Harpenden Society



Encouraging Harpenden's primary schools to bring out the creative talent of their pupils

The Society's primary schools competition, the outcome and results of which were reported at Celebration 2013, attracted well over 1000 entries from eleven of the town's thirteen primary schools. The expert panel of judges made 42 awards and every single child who entered has received a certificate.



Left. An example of the Awards Certificate. Right. Three teachers from The Grove Junior School collected prizes on behalf of their pupils
From left to right, Pippa Bremner (Co- Head), Yvonne Smith (Art Co-ordinator) and Janice Tearle (Co-Head) Below. A few examples of the children's creative work.

Each school won awards – and each school has been rewarded with a **W.H.Smith voucher**, with a generous discount provided by the company, while **fonehouse**, a new Harpenden business in Leyton Green providing mobile phone services, kindly gave three mobile phone prizes that were presented to the three schools that had the most entries. These were Grove Junior, Manland Primary and St. Dominic. There were fifteen categories. There were three divisions by age, fives to sevens, sevens to nines and nines to

elevens, and five by medium, namely, art, photography, drama, music and creative writing.

All addressed the question '*What do I like about Harpenden*'. The purpose of the competition was twofold. One was to alert schools and, through the schools, parents and others to the work of The Society. The other, and much more important aim, was to stimulate youngsters to think clearly and imaginatively about their immediate environment. Such has been the enthusiasm of teachers and children that plans are already being laid to make this an annual event.

The exhibition of winning entries at Celebration 2013 was the subject of considerable attention among those attending. 'We were bowled over by the enthusiasm and the imagination of the children and the gifted quality of their teachers', said Eric Midwinter, chairman of the eight-strong panel of judges.



Among other encouraging comments from the judges, Diana Godden said 'we particularly enjoyed the entries that showed originality and creativity'; Amanda Thomas said 'what a treat to be able to judge so much young writing talent' and Vicky Evans said 'the finalists conveyed the essence of Harpenden in impressive and colourful style.'



'What do I like about Harpenden'

The Harpenden Society Primary Schools Competition



The Judges.

at the Harpenden House Hotel on March 19th

Left to right above: Jeanette Lendon, Proprietor, Cocoon Photography. Diana Godden, Harpenden Evening Decorative and Fine Arts Society.

Eric Midwinter, Chairman and Co-convenor

The Harpenden Society Education and Leisure Working Group. Rachel Tuckley, Education and Leisure Working Group.

Andrew Wilson, Proprietor, A & K Wilson Art Gallery.

Vicky Evans, Education and Leisure Working Group. Ron Taylor Education and Leisure Working Group.

Amanda Thomas, Author and Historian.

Below. More examples of the children's creative work.

Participating Schools

Crabtree Infants

Crabtree Junior

Grove Infants

Grove Junior

High Beeches Primary

Manland Primary

Roundwood Primary

Sauncey Wood Primary

St Dominic RC Primary

St. Nicholas Primary

Wood End School



A beautifully written prize winning poem
by Emma from Grove Juniors

Harpenden

Mr City and Miss Country,
Were walking out one day,
When, like seeds on a dandelion,
They were suddenly blown away.

They collided to make,
Something very new,
Something quite original,
And brilliant, too.

It had sweet little Thorns, (Thorns sweets)
And presently grew Threads, (Threads craft & gifts)
As many flowers as a florist, (Perry florist flowers)
All green and red.

It then grew bits of lettuce, (Slug & Lettuce)
That many a slug would eat,
And below a funnily placed green stag, (Hertfordshire library)
All creatures would sit and read.

Soon, inside the thing,
A large object stood,
Cries came – 'Hip Hip Hurray!'
And 'That show was very good!' (The Public Halls)

Not long and splashes and screams could be heard,
And everywhere around,
Jaunty music would play
While footsteps ran up and down. (The Leisure centre)

Before long, more voices could be heard,
Detached from their owners,
Laughs and shouts and 'Be my friends
And 'Children, please focus!' (Schools)

There are so many attractions,
The list is very long,
So long that if I put everything in,
This poem would go on....and on.....and on....

Something as remarkable as the thing,
Has to have a name,
Being called something is rather essential,
If you are to rise to fame.

There were many name ideas,
Like 'Hertford' and 'St Alban'
But it was finally decided
'Behold Harpenden!'



Memos for Members

The Red House is Stirring

From our Roving Health Correspondent

The Society held a packed meeting on 21 February so that the public could join our members to hear what the Herts Community Trust, a newly created part of the NHS, is considering for the Red House. We heard from County Councillor Teresa Heritage that the County supports the proposal to revive the Red House while Eric Midwinter, Co-organiser with Teresa Heritage of the Red House Forum, set the issue in its historical context. Then David Law and Gerry Moir of the HCT described their ambitions for the Red house, and the development of their plans so far.

A good natured but serious discussion followed, and our speakers were left in no doubt about how much our townsfolk want to see all-round health care provided once again here in Harpenden. The depth of feeling in the town was clear.

The HCT promised to keep us updated about their thinking and we will place these announcements on the Society's website. Keep in touch! We will keep up the pressure. There will probably be another get-together in the The Society's next season of public meetings.



Above: Left to right. Eric Midwinter, Gerry Moir, Teresa Heritage and David Law. Below. A packed audience posing many questions.



Society Public Meetings

The next meeting is **Thurs 26 September Police and Crime**

The Society's Public Order Working Group has accomplished quite a coup in booking the recently appointed Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, David Lloyd, to speak at the opening meeting of the new series.

As usual, the meeting will be held at Park Hall, Leyton Road, beginning at 8.0 pm, with refreshments available from 7.30 pm.

Please make a note of the remaining dates for 2013;

Thurs 24 October and Thurs 12 December

Subjects and speakers will be announced in the autumn HSN.

Town Trails

The Harpenden and District Local History Society, with which The Harpenden Society enjoys close links, has published two attractive leaflets in a new 'Town Trails' series.

No 1 is 'A stroll along Harpenden High Street', along from The George and back down to the Harpenden Arms, and No 2 is 'Around the Common', starting at 2 Southdown Road and returning to the Yew Tree Farm.

For further details contact Membership Secretary Alan Bunting, 42 Ridgewood Drive, Harpenden AL5 3LH (01582 760564) arbunting@btinternet.com

DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?

If you haven't provided us with your email address, please do so by going to our website www.harpendensociety.org and selecting the 'join us' tab. The instructions are on the top left hand side of the page. If you are not sure whether you have given us your email address, please input it and you will be informed whether it is already registered. The Society is trying to keep members electronically informed through the chairman's monthly letters and in other ways and we want to ensure that as many members as wish to are enjoying this link.

The Harpenden Society Awards 2012

Anthony Steele, convenor of the awards panel of The Harpenden Society and his fellow judges, faced with the unusually high number of twelve nominations, made seven awards this year. Details of the forthcoming presentations will be given in our next editions.

Letter of Commendation – to the **Strada Restaurant**, Amenbury Lane

Certificates of Merit – to each of the Jubilee Crosses in Harpenden, Southdown and Batford and the Jubilee Arch in Thompsons Close, together with the **Jarvis** built Pine Court block of warden-controlled flats in Carlton Road financed by Mencap and deemed to be a rare example in Harpenden of good modern architecture.

The Harpenden Society Plaque for 2012 was awarded to the **Foresters** development of flats and small houses behind Bowers Parade. Also developed by **Jarvis**, it replaces a plot of small businesses some parts of which were in disrepair and, in the awards panel's opinion, makes for a very significant improvement that enhances the area considerably.

Special mention was made at 'Celebration 2013' of Geoffrey Bullimore who has for years acted as a 'good citizen' litter collector, while there was a 'booby prize' nomination for the new station passenger bridge, 'reminiscent', asserted the nominator, 'of the watch towers that used to overlook the Berlin Wall'.

Burglar Alarm

The Society's Public Order Working Group, keen to collect data about break-ins, have been asked by its police and allied sources to bring this message to people's attention:

'There has been an upsurge in the number of burglaries in the district and the best action people can take is to join Neighbourhood Watch and get the most up-to-date information.'

New Membership Drive

If you attended the Society's Celebration 2013 event on April 11 you will have realised how involved we have become in the town's activities during the last twelve months. Our future objective is to continue this trend and achieve positive results.

We can only do this with the 'active' support of our members. So with a growing demand on our time we need new members to help share the responsibilities and add weight to our influence in the town.

The Committee

Here is a list of The Society's officers and committee for the year 2013-14

Officers

President	Alison Steer
Vice President	Keith Jennings
Chairman	Chris Marsden
Vice-chairman	Richard Thomas
(also Co-convenor of the Education & Leisure and Health & Social Welfare Working Groups)	
Secretary	Bob Fletcher
Treasurer	Arnold Allen

Working Group Convenors

Public Order	Alan Jackson
Built Environment	TBC
Environmental Services	John Davis
Transport	Donald Robertson
Economic Activities	
aka 'Thriving High Street Network'	Chris Marsden
Education & Leisure)
Health & Social Welfare) Eric Midwinter
(Co-convenor and also Editor of Harpenden Society News)	
Membership Secretary	Barbara Ouston
Press Officer	Steve Gledhill
Publicity Officer	Ron Taylor
The Harpenden Society Awards	Anthony Steele
'Pulse' Group Co-ordinator	Vicky Evans
Penny Ayres	
Tim Riley	
Michael Waddilove	

All you have to do is recommend a friend to join the Society. It's that simple and there are TWO incentives. Firstly when your friend joins both you & a partner and the friend & a partner go into a FREE PRIZE DRAW to win dinner for two at The Harpenden House Hotel (ex drinks). Secondly the membership for the new member for the rest of 2013 is FREE.

Full details will be posted on the Society web site from August 1st and emailed to all existing members.