

**To the County Archivist from John Davis, Harpenden Society.**

**An addendum to the Commentary and attached Documents lodged with you earlier this year, this being a series of photocopies (to preserve their integrity) of various press cuttings and originals of various Harpenden Society committee reports as discovered recently in a separate archive in the Society's keeping.**

Much of this newly discovered documentation consists of the Society's comments on the early 1950s "Harpenden Development Plan" mentioned as Annex A in the earlier Commentary/attached documents which otherwise covered the 1961-89 period alone.

27/10/61 Thus most of the newspaper cuttings from the early 1950s have extensive, and generally critical, comments by the Society of the above-mentioned Development Plan, with its potentially very damaging inner ring road and with the possibility of straightening the eastern end of Station Road to scythe across what are now the playing fields and local nature reserve down to the Lower Luton Road – along with extensive house building etc. Later in that decade there were comments on the very disappointing demolition of the iconic Church Green cottages (to be replaced by a line of shops with flats above) apparently around 1959/60 – as inferred from the comment in the 27/10/61 cutting referring to "the new shops" on that site – and on the replacement of the substantial houses in Arden Grove (previously used for e.g. dental surgeries) by the current office development; and general concern in 1959 that Harpenden was losing its character under the impact of new housing on its periphery, including part at least of the famous Cox's orange pippin orchards in Townsend Lane.

Of rather later vintage, a June 1967 cutting described a major anti-litter campaign sponsored by the Society with pictures of students from a local school displaying the results of their labours in the form of the collected litter – an initiative also briefly mentioned in the original Commentary under 1966 noting that the Society had sponsored the school's anti-litter project and competitions for best posters and essays.

The above-mentioned committee reports, mainly from the 60s/early 70s but also going back in one instance to the annual report for 1947, are attached, mainly in their original form for the County Archive itself but with, as usual, the Society retaining copies. Some of these reports, e.g. "the report of the general committee 1971/72" included much information not available at the time I compiled the original Commentary on the Society's activities.

At that time it appeared there were only two public meetings a year, one in the Spring which incorporated the AGM, and another in the Autumn; but there had been suggestions that there should be more and since there did appear to be interest, with attendances having increased from under 40 to over 100, the committee said it would look into that possibility for the future. Also noted that Mr. Brandreth, the Librarian, had agreed to PRODUCE A NEWSLETTER, the first of which was planned for mid-1972, and the report ended with thanks to the Council's officials especially to the Clerk and Engineer (Messrs. Best/Pettingale) for their readiness to listen to the Society's representations.

There were Annual Reports, some letters etc. for most of the 1950s, including the Society's formal criticisms of the above mentioned Development Plan in two submissions to the County Planning Dept. in February 1953. On a lighter note, the annual report for 1952 mentioned that membership was "now over 200" and that the Society had placed a copy of the local 2½" to the mile O.S. map in the station booking hall and hopefully useful to visitors. The 1947 report started "After the break caused by the war, the Society resumed its activities on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1947 at a Special General Meeting where the name was changed from the original "Harpenden and District Preservation Society" to "The Harpenden Society" and the Constitution altered to include in the aims "the promotion of the general wellbeing of the people of Harpenden and its environment".

The information in some of the 1960s reports will obviously duplicate much of what is said in the original Commentary but despite that are likely to contain additional snippets of information not then available and have therefore been included in this bundle of documents.

Finally there is a "flyer" advertising a public meeting of the Harpenden Society on Wednesday October 24 1973 (as usual at that time in the Small Public Hall) to discuss The Formation of the Harpenden Local History Society. This possibility had been mooted on one of the attached documents, thought to be from September 1970, which mentioned a WEA course on Local History then being taken by Professor Lionel Munby emphasising the importance of collecting historical items and documents together for posterity – the main speaker at the above-mentioned public meeting.

As to the size and structure of The Society's Committee around those times, the following is the list as at the 1969 AGM showing 20 members, those underlined in that list being those who had already served for three years and would be required to retire with the possibility of being re-elected if they so wished "after a lapse of at least one year". This and its size are in marked contrast to current practice.

John Davis, December 2011

*John Davis*

*Cited newspaper cuttings and reports are attached (duplicates held by the Society)*

7. Election of Committee *at the April 29th 1969 AGM*

#### Committee

Mr. E. Brandreth  
Mrs. E.M. Crowther  
Mr. C.W. Curl  
Mr. R.G. Dixon  
Miss H. Finnie  
Mr. J.K.P. Gasser  
Mr. F. Goacher  
Mr. L. Green  
Mrs. A.R. Hassell  
Mr. E.G. Hill

Miss E. Hills Young  
Mr. M. St. John Hopper  
Mr. A.E. Hughes  
Mrs. M.K. Milne  
Miss B.M. North  
Mrs. D.M. Oakley  
Dr. C. Potter  
Mr. R.W. Roseveare  
Mr. Gordon Taylor  
Mr. E.P. Wilson