



## TA, VOLS

**That is an exceptionally brief title for a mighty theme – thank you, volunteers of The Harpenden Society.**

The Society, apart from its officers, committee and Working Groups, has two major voluntary brigades of quite distinctive brands. One is the skilled group of library volunteers who ensure that on every Wednesday afternoon and evening the Harpenden Library Express Service is sustained. The other is the hardy band of newsletter distributors without whom this august journal would lie unread and unheralded.

On Tuesday 7 July a party, attended by senior library officers as well as the volunteers and their partners, was held in the garden of Chris Marsden, The Society chairman, as a way of saying 'thank you' to the Society members who maintain that important Wednesday service. Wine and soft drinks flowed as easily as the fluent conversation as, in mellow mood, all enjoyed the proceedings.

On Saturday 22 August a party for the newsletter distributors, with several members of the committee in evidence, was held in the garden of Susan Vinther, the Society's highly effective Membership Secretary, who had recruited widely among her kinfolk to act as charming waiters and waitresses. After splendid eats and fortifying drinks the assembled party-goers enjoyed – and vociferously joined in with – the songs and music of the tunefully ebullient Mike Hodge, 'the Harpenden Busker'. It made for a most delightful occasion. As both the photographs show.

A word about Mike, who is a Society member, and an entertainer as indefatigable in his great work for

charity as he is gifted as a guitarist and pleasing presenter of songs that certainly resonated with those in attendance at the second of these two superb events...

....and both events were blessed by sunshine

(Editor's note; we were lucky with the weather for both these occasions but, then, one can be positive about any meteorological condition. In my native Manchester there used to be enormous church processions of witness on Whit Monday and Whit Friday with thousands of white-clad children on parade. If the sun shone the mothers would fondly remark 'God knows his own'; if – the likelier prospect – it was raining. the comment was 'God waters his little flowers'.)

**Above all else, these gatherings celebrated the truism that a civic society is only as strong as its members are active. The Harpenden Society is, like any such association, totally reliant on committee members and other supporters who do things rather than say things. It is the difference between a neighbourhood talk shop and a community commando unit.**



# The Harpenden in Question

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

## 19. Life and Death Matters



Shuffling through my own lecture notes at a conference, I was discourteously inattentive of the current speaker until he announced that 'if expenditure on the NHS were doubled, the health quotient of the nation would increase by one per cent; if it were halved the health quotient would decrease by one per cent.' It was a dramatic reminder that overall health is determined by the choices we all make all the time. The NHS is simply where you turn when you are ill. As David Law of the Herts Community NHS Trust recently told a meeting of the Red House Forum, at any one time only 5% of the population are using 40% of NHS and social care resources. If you take the average individual NHS budget over a lifetime, 90% is expended in the last five years of life.



The eminent Scottish geriatrician Sir Ferguson Anderson insisted on calling the NHS the 'National Illness Service' as it is curative rather than preventative. And, as David Law further explained, the old-style NHS construct is becoming outmoded. (See page 3 for more) The killer illnesses of old were savage infectious fevers. They were met with superb public health interventions by way of fresh water and sanitation backed by a vast array of long-stay hospitals. Most of these perils have been bested.

The present-day killers are of the same epidemic proportions but they are social rather than physical in origin. Cancer, heart disease, hypertension, depression, stroke, mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction and obesity – they are often the consequence of adverse social conditions. Smoking, chronic stress, poor diet, lack of exercise and pollution account for much illness. Public Health England's latest report estimates that 40% of British ill-health is determined by lifestyle.

Alcohol is implicated in 33,000 deaths a year and one in six A&E department admissions are alcohol-related. 1.5m in and out-patients annually have alcohol-associated problems, at a cost to the NHS of £3.75m. It is estimated there are 1.6m dependent drinkers in the



UK, compared with 332,000 dependent drug-users. Tobacco usage continues to cause of 114,000 deaths each year.



One in five British adults is seriously overweight, with 1m of them morbidly obese – and with 31,000 premature deaths the dire consequence. 1.5m children aged two to ten are either obese or overweight, with 500,000 children sadly at risk of liver disease. Half of the 16,500 deaths from bowel cancer are thought to be related to poor diet.

It is for these kinds of reasons that the NHS are attempting to shift to more community and less institutionalised systems, with the proposed Red House Health and Wellness campus, one hopes, a future example. It is for these reasons that a civic society, such as ours, should take an abiding interest in health matters.



As the medical sociologist Laura Stark has concluded, 'death is now socially constructed...the outcome of politics not biology.'

**Eric Midwinter**

# Red House Re-Visited

In the last Harpenden Society News we promised a longer update on the efforts of the Red House Forum, the ginger group set up by The Society to encourage a refurbishment of the Harpenden Memorial Hospital site. There was an especially heartening meeting of the Forum on 27 July at which the NHS officers explained the progress being made and promised.

David Law, Chief Executive of the Herts Community NHS Trust, listed the background factors as follows:

**a. The faltering attractions of medicine as a career – 25 % of GPs will retire from local practices in the next five years and recruitment is not keeping pace with these losses.**

**b. A joint approach to delivering care remains problematic in terms of the links among different providers, especially in cases where more than one condition is evident. Where a patient is suffering from three or more conditions, the cost rises exponentially as a person's needs increase.**

**c. Even among the older population the numbers of patients is actually small. For example, the treatment of diabetes, which affects 1.5% of the population, accounts for about 10% of NHS expenditure.**

**d. The chief motif of hospital development in the Victorian age and later was the treatment and cure of infectious diseases. The main issue today is dealing with long-term, often acute and incurable, conditions, for which the hospital mode is ill-suited.**

**e. The economic and allied political situation suggested that there would be over the next years a real decline in NHS funding. Cash is rising slightly but not keeping pace with demand.**



In response to these factors, NHS were pioneering in the Watford area the concept of 'case managers' to navigate the patient through the choppy waters of multi-agency provision, while 'health coaching', whereby patients were advised how to self-manage, was being developed. It was believed that self-management was both more effective and less expensive than institutional treatment.

In general, David Law concluded that the concept of a health and well being hub on the Harpenden Memorial Hospital site would be a distinctive marker of this all-round and progressive approach to health care.

Diane Brent of the Herts Community NHS Trust updated members on the progress made on the Red House project and inaugurated a useful discussion accordingly.

NHS officers indicated that at some mid-term point the Forum would be asked to assist with arrangements for making known the possibilities of the new venture with a view to asking the public for their suggestions and comments about how the local community might add to the utilisation of the refurbished/rebuilt Red House enterprise.

David Law and Diane Brent remained confident that the project could be delivered within an acceptable time span, perhaps as early as 2017. It all made for a heartening, crossed fingers, prospect.



## Unplanned Planning

**Deputy Editor Alan Bunting admirably conveys the sense of the 'deeply flawed' planning procedures revealed at The Society's public meeting on 8 October**

Today's planning procedures, as set out in the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and exemplified by St Albans District Council's Strategic Local Plan, are deeply flawed, according to a recently-retired Hertfordshire local authority officer.



Mike Carver, (above right with Tim Riley committee member) former East Herts District Council executive member for strategic planning, said improved procedures were needed. He criticised the failure of today's processes to live up to the NPPF's cardinal principles of sustainability, affordability, viability and deliverability.

It was evident that as councils strove to reconcile these admirable precepts, unavoidable conflicts had emerged, making the task impractical. National reorganisation, abolishing the former regional structures, had, said Mr Carver, led to muddle. Furthermore the reorganisation clashed with the proclaimed benefits of 'localism', often because too many other stakeholders were far from being local.

More crucially this led to the problem – massive but too often ignored – of infrastructure provision. Where new housing was planned, little attention was paid to the associated need for highway upgrading, water supply or schools provision. Then government, local authorities and developers became bogged down in prolonged arguments about who should pay.

He criticised the loose phrasing of NPPF

documentation, in that its wording could be challenged through the courts - how 'severe' was 'severe traffic'? Even more contentiously, he cited the term 'Green Belt', a commonly accepted term subject to constant dispute, with no legal definition of the 'exceptional circumstances' that might deter building thereon.

Planners were also unsettlingly aware that at any time, seemingly on a whim, central government could change the rules on permitted development, not least in the form of Green Belt reviews. It was not surprising, Mr Carver concluded, that councillors, let alone council tax payers, often could not understand planning processes, even though it was claimed that 'public engagement' was essential if local democracy was to be maintained.

## Seniors Fair

The Public Halls were busy again on Thursday Oct 1 for the Annual Seniors Fair. Drumming up membership on our stand were Harry Downie (left) and Bob Fletcher



## Society Christmas Meeting Dec 10

Join us for a Christmas Get Together to enjoy mulled wine and mince pies and discuss issues about living in Harpenden which concern you. Our Chairman, Chris Marsden, accompanied by other committee members will lead an open ended discussion on issues raised by you. This will help the Society review its priorities for the year ahead.

Entry and refreshments are free. In addition there will be a free draw for prizes that include tickets for the local Aladdin pantomime, bottles of wine and more. It's all happening at 7.30 pm on Thursday 10 December in Park Hall, Leyton Rd.

Please send comments on any issue raised in this edition to the editor:  
Eric Midwinter 37 Bloomfield Rd.  
Harpenden AL5 4DD  
editor@harpendensociety.org.uk  
Deputy editor Alan Bunting  
Sub-editor Harry Downie

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Visit the Society's website –  
[www.harpendensociety.org](http://www.harpendensociety.org)

## Secondary School Schedule

At a meeting in September at Roundwood Park Secondary School, arranged by the Harpenden Parents Group, a weighty panel of officials and experts addressed a large audience on the subject of the planned new secondary school. In summary, it was found that, after a further round of consultation, the Common Lane, Batford (Site F) is the only location suitable for the building.



Herts County Council must now buy the land either by successful negotiation with the landowner or, failing that, by compulsory purchase order. It was stated that a sum of £7.5m is available for the purchase of this site and one at Croxley Green. Only when the land is secured – and that might take two years – may planning permission be sought.

Modular designs are available from the national Education Funding Agency and the actual building, it is estimated, would take one year. A £5m budget will also be available for a 'transport mitigator', that is to undertake work that would help solve problems arising from the pupils' travel to and from school.

In the event of delay beyond the hoped for 2017 opening date, temporary buildings might, provided the land had been acquired, be erected or help would be offered by other schools in the SADC area.

It looks like a very tight call.

## Membership Notice Subscriptions

If there is a membership form inside this newsletter it means that you do not have a standing order for payment of subs but pay by other means each year.

The simplest thing is to fill in the form now, renewing the gift aid declaration if possible, and to send a cheque off forthwith.

For this we thank you wholeheartedly, as it will save many a phone call and email in the months to come. If you choose to make an electronic transfer instead it would be helpful to know.

Alternatively, you could use the form to start paying by standing order - we are always happy to see members use this payment method. We are also happy to answer any queries you may have.

Harry Downie Treasurer 762259

Susan Vinther Membership Secretary 622816

## The Harpenden Society AWARDS 2015

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 2015 that you believe are worthy of our recognition. The premier award is a Plaque for outstanding projects. Other projects may be given a Certificate of Merit or a Letter of Commendation.

In 2014 the winner was the Lea Springs Apartments in Lower Luton Road.



**Please complete either or both these sections below by March 1st 2016:**

**I wish to nominate the following for the 2015 Harpenden Society Plaque:**

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**I wish to nominate the following for a 2015 Harpenden Society Certificate of Merit or Letter of Commendation**

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**Please use this space for any comments**

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Please email to '[awards@harpendensociety.org](mailto: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](http://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**

## Keeping Watch

Our regular column of advice from The Society's Community Safety Working Group

### Warning about Thefts from Cars

If you have a car with remote locking you probably feel you've done all you can to prevent the theft of its contents after you've pressed the button to lock it. Not so. Car thieves have equipment which, if they are close enough, allows them to record the information in the radio signal used to lock and unlock your car. They can then replicate it and gain access to your car. Typically, you park at a busy motorway service station, lock the car and go to use the station's facilities. When you come back your car is still locked, but the contents have gone! There is something you can do to minimise this risk: when parking in a busy public car park always lock and unlock the car only by inserting the key in a door lock.

### SADC's New Charitable Collections Policy

St Albans District Council has adopted a new policy which will apply to those seeking permits to collect money or clothing for charitable purposes. This will include the question of establishing whether a door-to-door clothing collection is a legitimate charitable collection and concerns their interpretation of what is an adequate amount of money going to a charity from a clothing collection. The new policy is on SADC's website. To find out whether a house-to-house collection is genuine or if the organisation holds a National Exemption Order email.

[charitablecollections@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:charitablecollections@stalbans.gov.uk) or phone 01727 819254.

### Phone Scams

These reports have in the past highlighted the danger posed by phone scams. An attempted scam concerning a woman in her 90s in Harpenden was foiled on 19 August. According to a police report, early in the afternoon she was called by someone claiming to be from the Metropolitan Police Service. Among other things, they instructed her to withdraw cash from her account to assist a police investigation. A private hire vehicle was sent to her address to collect the money: but the police had already been called. They stopped two people and arrested them. Guidance documents on scam avoidance from Herts Trading Standards can be found by going to [www.hertsdirect.org](http://www.hertsdirect.org) and following the link to 'Consumer advice' and then 'scams'.

### Bogus Tradesmen

The police have asked people to call them on 101 (and to speak to DS Pete Hankins) if they have had any dealings with a roofing/gardening firm trading under the name 'Property Master' (they use a white Ford Transit bearing the same company name).

**We are again indebted to Alan Jackson and his colleagues on the Community Safety Working Group for this very useful service.**

## Richard Thomas; 'The Bench Fund'

We are pleased to announce that the fund being raised to place a bench in memory of Richard Thomas in Ambrose Wood has topped £900, so as well as providing for the bench there will be a tidy sum over for Richard's favoured charity, the Prison Fellowship (Bovingdon)



### Harpenden U3A is Expanding

The Harpenden U3A (University of the Third Age) is planning to expand its programme of activities in 2016. It hopes to recruit a bigger membership of older people and offer a wider range of 'interest groups'.

Anyone interested in finding out more – or even feeling ready to lead or organise an 'interest group' - should contact Eric Midwinter, President and now Chairman of the U3A at [eric.midwinter@virgin.net](mailto:eric.midwinter@virgin.net) or by mail 37 Bloomfield Road, Harpenden AL5 4DD and/or (preferably both!) drop in at the U3A's DROP IN SESSION at Park Hall, Leyton Road on Friday 20 November anytime between 12.00 and 4.00 pm to chat with Eric and other U3A stalwarts about this new programme.

