Clean for the Queen

Letter-picking in Verulamium Park with Cllr Jessica Chivers includes the national ‘Clean for the Queen’ event on 5 March.

Tell us!
If you wish to make any comment or complaint to the Council about the removal of public car parking facilities, please contact the Memberships Secretary, by email ptrevelyan@aol.com or telephone 01727 838965. It is our intention to remove the majority of public car parking facilities from the Town Centre area in the future. Please contact the Memberships Secretary, by email ptrevelyan@aol.com or telephone 01727 838965 if you can spare 1½ hours on a couple of weekends between Easter and September. Go on – it’s fun! You meet some great people.

Forthcoming events 2016

Thursday 17 March Fleeetville: A Game of Consequences A talk by Michael Neighbour of Fleeville Diaries. The Cross Street Centre* Dugdall Street at 8:00pm - FREE Thursday 21 April Views of a local architect A talk by Matt Briffa. (Joint meeting with Herts Association of Architects). The Cross Street Centre* Dugdall Street at 8:00pm - FREE Saturday 7 May Spring visit by rail to Aye (East Susses) Thursday 18 May Planning Matters in St Albans An illustrated talk with time for questions by Tracey Harvey, Head of Planning at St Albans Council. The Cross Street Centre* Dugdall Street at 8:00pm - FREE Sunday 20 June (afternoon) Larks in the Park The Society will have its gazebo and stall at the event in Victoria Playing Field. Thursday 30 June Annual General Meeting - Dragon Centre, St Peter’s Church, 8.00pm Saturday 27 July (afternoon) Annual Cricket match The Society & PFP’v the Council Victoria Playing Field. *Disabled parking only at The Cross Street Centre. There are public car parks nearby.

The Society acknowledges with gratitude the support from the following Corporate Members:

T&B (St Albans) Ltd Debenhams Ottaway Rumball Sedgwick National Pharmaceutical Association Christopher Place Shopping Centre St Columba’s College

Civic Society newsletter

T& B (St Albans) Ltd
St Columba’s College
Rumball Sedgwick

News from the Clock Tower

The Society opened the Clock Tower for the launch of Sustainability Week on a Friday 21 November, and for the Sunday afternoon of ‘Enjoy St Albans’ weekend 23-24 January. Both saw good attendances. The new season commences on Good Friday 25 March.

More volunteers are needed to help keep this important heritage attraction open.

Please contact Jill Singer (@johney@o2.co.uk or 01727 836965) if you can spare 1½ hours on a couple of weekends between Easter and September. Go on – it’s fun! You meet some great people.

The Society is looking for a new Secretary

If you are well organised, have some spare time, and would like to be involved, we should welcome your interest. Full details are on the website.

Please contact Tim Boatswain, Chairman timboatswain@hotmail.com 07877 560674

Membership Matters

To join or renew membership

Subscriptions remain unchanged and are renewable on 1 April each year.

| Individual | £10 |
| Family (2 or more) | £15 |
| Pensioner/Student/Unwaged | £7 |
| Residents’ Association Free |
| Corporate | £50 |

To join or check payment details please contact the Membership Secretary.

If you are well organised, have some spare time, and would like to be involved, we should welcome your interest. Full details are on the website.

Please contact Tim Boatswain, Chairman timboatswain@hotmail.com 07877 560674

Chairman: Tim Boatswain timboatswain@hotmail.com 07877 560674

What’s lurking in the lakes?

To see inside

Editor’s Note: see website to read Peter’s article in full. And of course we still have our great Markets, although not about the Christmas one (£40,000 lost so far)!

Peter Newby

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Subscriptions are due on 1 April 2016. Your membership is valued. Please renew promptly. See Membership Matters (back page).

Nominations to the Society’s Awards team for projects finished in 2015 are now sought. Please send to Peter Trelveyn ptrevelyan@aol.com 01727 843656. The Awards team is Peter Denney, Brian Holmes, Jill Singer, Alan Smith and Peter Trelveyn.

St Albans Civic Society Newsletter [Spring 2016] www.stalbanscivicsociety.net
Synergy works

A n economic growth report in 2015 for UK’s towns and cities placed St Albans in sixth position. In 1929, Cambridge was top, Brighton second, see below.

Surprise, surprise! Commenting on this, Nigel Palmer of Lambert Smith Hampton’s Hertfordshire office expressed concern that St Albans’ potential could be being hindered by the lack of available office space. He suggested that Government policy allowing offices to convert automatically into flats by a ‘prior approval’ planning rule, is causing a shortage of office space which is probably discouraging new businesses.

We warned this could happen two years ago, and were initially accused of making up such (then new) rules, and scaremongering. As a result, job opportunities have now been lost with commuting even more inevitable if people want to find work.

At a recent business meeting, this limited office availability was raised with Officers from St Albans Council. What was the Council doing about this? The answer apparently nothing.

In 2014 the Society informed the Council about Brighton, see above, and Richmond, where Action had been taken to protect their stock of offices, and jobs. They created Article 4 Direction Zones meaning planning permission was still required. It’s probably now too late to do this here. Such inaction could have cost us dear.

At the same meeting was Dorothy Thornhill, elected Mayor of Watford. She was asked by a Society committee member what Watford had done. They had also created an Article 4 around Clarendon Road, which has kept its offices. Bravo! That was positive town planning in action.

Dorothy Thornhill has been very effective in Watford. The refurbishment of the High Street has been impressive, especially when compared to St Albans’ Street, which now looks tired and is not particularly well maintained by the Utilities and the County Council.

Oh that we had such enterprise and attention to detail! We would gladly support such an initiative and person(s). Something for the City Centre Manager and Partnership to help us get some results. A bit of synergy can go a long way.

Eric Roberts

Editors’ Note: This was the Committee’s February article in The Review newspaper.

Strategic Rail Freight Interchange and rail service update

Things appear to be moving on that we have previously reported on. Network Rail’s plan for a SRFI can still be avoided on the Green Belt land near Park Street.

Firstly, the County Council is looking at options as to how it will sell the land. The Society considers that if this land can be developed for ‘Very Special Circumstances’, then surely our housing needs are even more special and should trump the SRFI and so reduce loss elsewhere of Green Belt land. The County should bear this in mind.

Secondly, the penny seems to have dropped over Network Rail’s inability to schedule the works and the extra freightrains into and out of the SRFI by 7am on weekdays. Introduction of a 24-hour service during Bank Holidays is badly needed.

Eric Roberts

Editors’ Note: This is the Committee’s February article in The Review newspaper.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Vision for St Albans 2030

SCENARIO ONE

A serious world-wide recession has arrived, echoing the 100 years since the great depression of the thirties, starting with the Wall Street Collapse of 1929. St Albans has become a commuter city, converting all its business and workshop buildings into flats. Now that the London economy and its jobs market has collapsed, many of these properties are empty, and in a state of negative equity. The industrial, workshop and business properties have all closed down, and so there is no local market for job opportunities.

This production of multiple, obsolete, area probably discouraging new businesses. Shopping is closed. A lack of maintenance of our urban facilities is giving an air of inevitability if people want to find work. At a recent business meeting, this limited office availability was raised with Officers from St Albans Council. What was the Council doing about this? The answer apparently nothing.

In 2014 the Society informed the Council about Brighton, see above, and Richmond, where Action had been taken to protect their stock of offices, and jobs. They created Article 4 Direction Zones meaning planning permission was still required. It’s probably now too late to do this here. Such inaction could have cost us dear.

At the same meeting was Dorothy Thornhill, elected Mayor of Watford. She was asked by a Society committee member what Watford had done. They had also created an Article 4 around Clarendon Road, which has kept its offices. Bravo! That was positive town planning in action.

Dorothy Thornhill has been very effective in Watford. The refurbishment of the High Street has been impressive, especially when compared to St Albans’ Street, which now looks tired and is not particularly well maintained by the Utilities and the County Council.

Oh that we had such enterprise and attention to detail! We would gladly support such an initiative and person(s). Something for the City Centre Manager and Partnership to help us get some results. A bit of synergy can go a long way.

Eric Roberts

Editors’ Note: This was the Committee’s February article in The Review newspaper.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Vision for St Albans 2030

SCENARIO TWO

The Economy is healthy and booming. A new Government has been elected with a mandate for the protection of the Green Belt, positive policies on heritage, and the development and protection of historic cities. St Albans has been targeted as a model example, bringing new resources to conservation and investment in the urban structure enjoyed by other cathedral cities. An act is being implemented to ensure that all new and up-keep work has to be carried out by eminent architects from an approved list.

Sustainable standards are made mandatory, with solar gain and other environmentally friendly conditions. Electric cars and buses are required, resulting in an improvement in air quality. New buildings will have to operate zero energy criteria.

The Town Hall Museum and Art Gallery has been closed for refurbishment. The River Ver has dried up, because the increases in housing created the need for more water, but there was not a sufficient increase in rainfall. Thoughts about sustainability have been abandoned.

Editors’ Note: this amusing but thought-provoking article by Gerard John, the Society’s President, appeared in the booklet produced for the successful Sustainability Week held last November, which the Society helped sponsor.

Shopping in St Albans

What has happened to shopping in St Albans? Are the changes of the last twelve months the most important or the most particular to our city or are they part of a more general trend? If we take a long view, shopping provision has changed significantly. Fifty years ago there was a continuous strand of shops along much of Catherine Street, the length of St Peter’s Street from north of the roundabout, through Market Place and Chequers Street to the top end of Holywell Hill with an east/west axis along London Road from the junction with car park, along High Street and down George Street.

The expansion of multiples, especially supermarkets and clothes stores, took trade away from independent retailers but the premises they vacated were usually too small for those that were replacing them. This led to the shrinkage of the old shopping area but, as a result of the need for larger shops, development of suitable premises took place on new locations.

The changes that we see today are also the product of economic forces but this time they are not associated with the economics of town planning. St Albans has become a commuter city, with most people coming to work by car. The greasing and new high standards in the urban fabric, make the city a delight to live in.

The housing targets of the past regimes have been dropped, but the economics of consumer preference, in particular how much money we have to spend and how we choose to spend it. In 2015 the average expenditure for an internet shopper was £1.174, almost 10% higher than the previous year.

Continued over page

International and Blackfriars, with services diverging from from the St Albans line and from the Cambridge/Stevenson route, and vice versa. One train only has to be seconds later and the whole service starts to fall apart.

So, let’s raise the level of debate and analysis higher than the periodic photocall of some disgruntled local councillor standing in front of the City station. Likewise, those meetings between council and rail officials. What good do either really do?

Proper, robust service planning needs to take account of ‘leaves on the line’ (a layer of grease slime which is a continuing problem for modern disc-braked trains), the type of powdery snow (which can clog traction motors and cause them to cause out), equipment failures, and other random incidents. Introduce heavy goods, the SRFl and road service updates.

The Society has sponsored £100 a pair of Angels as part of the St Albans Community Playgroup’s campaign to raise funds for new facilities and educational facilities. The message the two Angels are holding reads: “Looking to the Future, Watching over them.” The Angels were taken down for Lent, and we hope to have ours on display later in the Clock Tower or in Kingsbury Barn.

The Society has pledged £500 for the Playground Appeal by the Friends of Victoria Playing Field. The group had to raise £10,000 by 20 February or lose a major grant. There was a small short-fall in early February so the Society also considered offering a loan. The Friends were reached out to, thus enabling this worthwhile project to proceed. Well done the Friends!

A re combined Residents’ Associations meeting, the Society was informed that one of the reasons the Council was dragging its heels about the condition of the lakes was “there had not been any letters of complaint” – this despite all the publicity in the local press! It was resolved that each organisation would act accordingly. Here is the text of the Society’s letter. Our picture shows the anaemic condition of the lake on a cold 11 February this year, just waiting to ‘bloom’ in the Spring, 2017.

To the Chief Executive: (cc: Cllr J Daly leader of the Council)
The Civic Society wishes to make the following complaint. It concerns the ongoing unsatisfactory situation regarding the pollution in Verulamium Park’s lakes.

Our complaint concerns the apparent pro-cquisition and lack of action by the Council in addressing the pollution in the lakes. The problems experienced last year, which resulted in dying ducks, sick dogs and distressed children, residents and visitors cannot be allowed to repeat itself this summer. It will if the Council fails to act.