President: Geraint John
Chairman: Tim Boatman 01727 586074

St Albans Civic Society
Looking to the future - with an eye on the past

This edition has been prepared by Eric Roberts (Committee member) and Peter Trevelayn (Editors Panel).

If you have any comments, please write to the Editors: 5A Holywell Street, St Albans AL1 4HN or email ptrevelayn@aol.com

We very much appreciate your views and information on topics.

The St Albans Civic Society is now on Twitter. Follow us at @stalbancivicsoc

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

To join or renew membership
Subscriptions remain unchanged and are renewable on 1 April each year.

| Individual | £40 |
| Family (2 or more) | £65 |
| Pensioner/Student/U3A | £47 |
| Corporate | £50 |

Please send subscriptions slips to the Membership Secretary so that he does not forget to bill you, or if you have already sent your slip is included with the Folkestone visit (FREE). There will also be a (FREE) one hour stall. Rates remain unchanged yet again – see back page – around 2p a day or less!

We draw your attention to the Spring Visit to Folkestone on Saturday 6 May, and the Civic Day celebration on 17 June. There are details and amendments of events for you to add to your 2017 Programme Card, distributed with this edition. Some spare copies are still available on request.

Send an e.a.c. to St Albans Civic Society Events, c/o 50 Fel랍St Albs AL1 4RT

National planning – the local Government Information Unit, Jonathan Care/West said "the planning system is one of the fundamental pillars of local democracy. We have a duty to ensure that the planning system is fit for purpose, is fit for future use, and that it is fit for the future."

In order to avoid any possible confusion or misunderstanding members are respectfully asked that, should they be involved in any meeting or activity where they declare they are a member of this Society, they make it clear that their attendance and any opinion expressed does not necessarily give the Society’s contribution to national Civic Day. The Prime Minister recently backed this event. It takes place on Saturday 17 June. There will be an opportunity for people to visit the Tower, and post-note what they are proud of in St Albans, and also what they are dismayed about. A kind of Pride and Prejudice? (The same opportunity will be at our Larks in the Park stall.) There will also be a (FREE) one hour afternoon walk: Civic Pride – some highs and lows starting at 2.30pm from outside the Tower. A special memorial exhibition will be available from 16 June to 2 July. More in the Summer newsletter. Look out for the Society’s monthly columns in the Herts Advertiser in May, and also for updates. The Tower will also be open for Herts Big Weekend, 1-2 April and then Good Friday 14 April, and on other bank holidays and weekends until the end of September.

We bid a fond farewell to Vic Morden, the Chairman of the Trust since 1986. Vic will remain on the Trust’s steering committee.

Volunteers are needed PLEASE HELP Contact Jill Singer on 01727 838965 or joxhey@gmail.com

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

| Austin T Yuexuan Associates | Christopehe Place Shopping Centre |
| Deynand’s | St Albans Civic Society |
| St Columba’s College | TSB (St Albans) Ltd |

This special edition was made possible by members of the St Albans Civic Society. The Society welcomes contributions from members and readers. Designed by Bob Bellamy

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What will you nominate?

It’s that time of year again! The Society is looking for nominations for the best projects finished in St Albans last year – between 1 January and 31 December 2016. Have you noticed any new building, an extension or refurbishment that took your eye? Something that has improved the look of your neighbourhood and St Albans, or has enhanced local surroundings and amenities? Remember it does not have to be about architecture or buildings, the Awards are not just about some grand design project. In previous years, the top Award has gone to the restored Watercress Beds and, in another year, to those giant Albans Pilgrimage puppets that have become so popular.

That top Award is the Society’s much coveted (we’re told) plaque and now there is also a separate category in the Trevelyan Prize for the best conservation achievement.

Every nomination will be put forward for judging by our Awards Panel. This will then become a shortlist of entries to be announced at a special celebration evening for Society members and guests on 5 October at the Maltings Arts Theatre, complete with (free) delicious canapés and drinks!

So, how do you nominate? It’s dead easy – and you don’t have to be a member. The Society is keen to hear from as wide a range of local people as possible. Write to:

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St Albans, AL3 4SE

Arts and Heritage Office, St Albans City and District Council, 5 St Michael’s Street, St Albans, Herts AL3 4SE

For Awards Panel and Committee

Dear Editor

It was great to learn from (the Council’s) Jenny Swatton of St Albans Visitor Partnership (Herts Advertiser 29/12/2016) that the City’s visitor economy was worth £188 million in 2015 and that data indicates “record numbers of visitors flocked to St Albans” in 2015. St Albans City and District Council are already promoting a series of major events for visitors in 2017, in order not only to boost the local economy but also to draw attention to the City’s heritage. This year the council “has thrown its support behind the Herts Big Weekend” (Herts Advertiser 22/12/2016), an annual celebration of the County’s visitor attractions, 1-2 April 2017, replacing the Residents Enjoy St Albans, which was previously known as Residents First. Given the intention of boosting the visitor economy and highlighting St Albans’ heritage, it is disappointing that the Council ceased its promotion of Heritage Open Days (in 2014). Heritage Open Days were established as England’s contribution to European Heritage Days and, since then, have grown into the country’s largest heritage celebration. Last year (and in 2015), in order to ensure the City’s participation in Heritage Open Days, St Albans Civic Society, along with the help of the Herts Advertiser and the support of a wide range of participating institutions, was able to offer over 25 different events and visitor opportunities; for example, the Clock Tower was open, without charge, for that weekend and had over 1200 visitors. This year the Heritage Open Days will be from 7-10 September, and not promoting them seems like a missed opportunity, especially when we know that the transfer of the Visitor’s Centre from the Town Hall has resulted in a massive drop in visitor inquiries (Herts Advertiser 29/12/2016). Shouldn’t the Council back up its rhetoric about the visitor economy, come on board again with the Heritage Open Days, and partner the Civic Society (and Herts Advertiser) in promoting St Albans’ wonderful heritage?

Tim Boatinac 09.01.17

Editors’ note: We hope that the Council will say “YES”, and get on board again. It really would back up Cllr Brewer’s words, and the slogans about heritage displayed on those very handsome hoardings around the Town Hall. Do take a look!

Jill Singer

One of the free Town Hall hoardings

Talking heritage

“St Albans is a city with 2,000 years worth of history and a lot of heritage to brag about”. So said Councillor Annie Brewer, portfolio holder, in an article about the importance of heritage tourism in the 27 October 2016 Herts Advertiser. And she is absolutely right. This, and the more recent article mentioned below, prompted the following from our Chairman:

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Business Rates hike

The recent national valuation proposals mean a huge increase in business rates for some commercial properties, including pubs. This is especially so where hikes of between 100% - 400% have been reported. One hundred percent rises for our cinema and theatre are likely. Such huge percentages are surely unsustainable and disproportionate. Some smaller businesses are said to be hit equally hard, yet bigger concerns like supermarkets are being spared such massive increases. Indeed, it is reported that the Sainsbury’s Superstore in London Colney gets a 10% reduction.

Our pubs are an important part of our heritage, culture and amenities, as are the cinema, theatre and our smaller shops. The Society is very concerned and supports the local initiative in asking our MP to raise the matter with the Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, and our Council.

Surely it cannot be in anyone’s interest to undermine businesses that are so vital to our local economy with such enormous hikes in rates. What is going on?

See #saveourpubs; sign petition at petition.parliament.uk/petitions/ 181859

Eric Roberts

For Committee

The art of inaction

“Like trying to pin jelly to a wall!”

That was the exasperated comment from a Civic Society representative to a recent committee meeting after attending a Council forum for Clarence Park. Another, who had gone to the similar Verulamium Park Forum, had equal frustration and dismay at the lack of any real progress on outstanding issues.

But not quite! In the case of Verulamium Park, the Council’s portfolio holder, Cllr Chichester-Miles, has announced, as reported in the 26 January Herts Advertiser, that “stronger worded signs” have been erected to discourage people from feeding the ducks. Wow! That’s all the disappointed children. What next! Similar signs asking the wildlife not to poo in the waters?

According to Council-speak, these subjects are in ‘amber mode’. It’s also said that ‘action trackers’ are in place. But monitoring what? Who thinks up this claptrap?

In those immortal words of our Sovereign’s husband, “Pull your finger out” – Council. Get that new entrance to our glorious Clarence Park started now. Because, the inevitable has happened. The entrance has been closed off for safety reasons. ‘Bed mode’, for danger, has now been reached!

As for Verulamium Park lakes, in this veritable jewel of St Albans, enjoyed by residents and visitors, there is a need to do something very soon. Surely the Council cannot allow the stink, slaughter and distress to be repeated for a third summer. Come on Council, spring into action. Give us some Civic pride here. St Albans has waited long enough and deserves better.

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