

# *alton now*

*Journal of the Alton Society*

*A Happy New Year to you all!*

## **Chairman's Comments**

Our AGM was marked this year by the new Alton Society Award for Outstanding Services to the Town. We were delighted that it went to Luath Grant Ferguson, who has done so much for Alton over the years. As a number of you were not able to be present, we elaborate further on his award on Page 7. We also presented the John Ambrose Award to Vintage Violet which has created an excellent shop front on the corner of Turk Street, setting an example for emulation elsewhere in the town centre. The citation is given on Page 6. We congratulate these two worthy winners.

The business of the AGM is reported on Pages 10 and 11. Three members of the Committee retired and we thank Reg Aldhous for his assiduous chairmanship in recent years, Geoff Nicholas who has done so much for the Society over 25 years, and John Chaplin who has helped so much on transport matters and photography. We are delighted that Nick Carey-Thomas has rejoined the Committee after a year or two's break, that James Willis has been elected and Norman Isham co-opted. Although this gives us strength for the short term, we need more committee members. So please offer yourselves if you are interested in the aims of the Society, which, in a nut shell, are to care for the future of Alton.

Owing to other commitments, we have not been able to appoint a full-time Chairman and so have reverted to a rotating Chairmanship, as used some 4 years ago, and whereby different officers of the Committee take it in turns to be Chairman for about three months at a time.

I am the first to take on this role, until March, when I shall handover to Mike Heelis. Then Jan Nicholas will take it on from June to September, and Nick Carey-Thomas for the final quarter, from September until the 2008 AGM.

Apart from continuing to monitor planning applications, assist in preparing the Alton Design Statement, and Alton's Local List, and maintain Flood Meadows in our working parties on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday morning of each month, we are planning some visits for this year. Last year we made a very successful and informative visit to the Material Recycling Facility at Cuckoos Corner. This year we propose to visit Romsey, a similar small town with many of the same problems and opportunities as Alton. Details will be announced in the Spring Newsletter.

After the formal business of the recent AGM, a presentation was given by Mike Heelis and myself on the Town Design Statement being prepared by the Alton Town Partnership. It has received the blessings of Alton Town Council and East Hampshire District Council's Planning Committee. Now it has been handed over to EHDC for completion of its political processes and public consultation. It is hoped that it will be published by the middle of this year.

*Edward Hepper*  
*Acting Chairman*

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT GROUP**

### **Planning Matters**

There have been a number of planning applications for temporary awnings or other impermanent shelters for smokers outside pubs. Usually they are inconspicuous but, where on the front of the building, take the form of traditional shop awnings. We have not felt any reason to object to them.

There have also been a number of apparently retrospective applications to permit alterations made without permission between 10 and 20 years ago to Listed buildings. While this is a laudable tidying up exercise, it is evidently 'after the horse has bolted.' Generally these are for small non-structural things like signage or uPVC double glazing. These can be remedied at a later date when the signs or windows need replacing and, if they have not caused any strong objection since they were installed, one wonders whether it is worthwhile changing before natural replacement is needed. Maybe a strong letter and clear note on file are all that is necessary at the moment. On the other hand, some clearly detrimental shop frontages have slipped through the net, some with listed building consent, and it would be good to have them replaced to better designs. And the design of some double glazing is so inappropriate that it devalues the interest of an otherwise good Listed building and should be replaced.

A group of applications have been made by the French Horn pub on Butts Green, one for a small awning over the rear door, one for modifications to the sign and one for new uPVC barge boards on a modern extension at the back. We saw little cause for objection but have been advised that EHDC has refused them.

It is good to see that one of Alton's disastrously decayed houses on a main road approach, 10 Butts Road, has been taken in hand and is being repaired and cleaned up.

It is to be hoped that others will be tackled soon in the same way, an important example being the old gasworks site on Butts Road, where it is important to facilitate the combination of the parts of the site owned by British Gas and its subsidiaries so that the site can be developed as a whole, with enough saleable units (and parking spaces) to subsidize the costs of environmental clean-up.

Another application has been made for back-land development behind Normandy Street. Architecturally it is of poor quality but, in our view, the main cause for objection is the extra traffic being put into the narrow un-made track at the back. Other recent objections to EHDC for this reason have been upheld and we hope this one will be too.

A revised application has been submitted for 14 flats on the site on Turk Street and Drayman's Way, between Coors and Sainsbury's. We have objected because of gross over-development, mean internal space standards and insufficient parking provision.

Regarding the major outstanding applications, Coors Sports Ground, Chandos Lodge, the old ambulance depot in Albert Road, and Garwoods in Holybourne, it is disappointing to see so little attempt being made to lead by example in sustainable design, eg with solar panels for water-heating or electricity generation by photo-voltaic cells, or with grey-water systems for conservation of scarce water supplies and re-use of grey water for eg toilet flushing and garden watering. Alton and EHDC should be leading the way in combating climate change. On the other hand, it is good to see Alton Town Council continuing to refuse any development in Chawton Park Road until the County tackles the traffic problems in the road and at each end.

### **The South East Plan**

The Public Inquiry has been completed. The Inspector's recommendations should be submitted to the Minister and published in August 2007. The Minister's decision should be announced later this year. It is anticipated that the region will be expected to provide some 50% more homes than proposed by SEERA.

Govt has said that the Regional Assemblies will not continue beyond March 2010. It is not clear what will replace them as the next level of planning authority above the District Councils – probably diktat from Whitehall through the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) – or will the County Councils be re-invented? Certainly SEERA and HCC are fighting hard for enough infrastructure to support the increased new housing being imposed. We need authorities bigger than District Councils to do this and probably even County Councils may not be sufficiently influential. The South East Regional Assembly (SEERA) has published statements to show that even a 64% increase in house building in the area will not decrease house prices by 2020 and also to demonstrate the lack of democracy in the new arrangements proposed by Whitehall and the SEEDA, a useful body of appointees with pretensions to democracy.

### **The South Downs National Park**

The Inquiry is to be re-opened on 12 Feb 2008 in respect of the exclusion of Petersfield and some AONBs in EHDC. It is hoped that the Minister will announce his decision later this year or early 2009.

At the original Inquiry, we argued unsuccessfully for the inclusion of Alton but it was unrealistic in view of Alton's size – no other national park has a town anything like as large. This will argue against Petersfield. In my view, we would prefer to be treated similarly to Petersfield, ie. either both in or both out.

### **Transport**

A planning application has been submitted to Hampshire County Council for the movement of 16.5m road tankers of 21,000 litres of gas at a pressure of 1500psi through Alton from Singleton to the Humbly Grove site 12 times a day, seven days a week until 2016. Although we welcome the opportunity to use the gas sensibly for energy generation instead of wasting it by flaring it off (producing greenhouse gases but without any benefit to society), we are not comfortable with transporting it so far by road which itself wastes energy and produces greenhouse gases. Furthermore, the tankers would travel up the A32 and A339 roads, both listed as high accident roads and would pass through Whitedown Lane and the constricted and accident-prone Butts Railway Bridges junction. Even if they are well designed with adequate factors of safety, road safety is a concern and twelve tankers per day seven days per week will make a significant increase in this type of hazardous traffic. Should any reader wish to object, there may still be time to contact Peter Chadwick (01962 846728) of HCC's Minerals and Waste Planning Dept in Winchester before mid-January under reference number BA057/BDB67621 and copy your comments to [ejhepper@btinternet.com](mailto:ejhepper@btinternet.com). We have already registered the Society's concern.

*Edward Hepper*

### **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Dear Editor,

I refer to the article 'Alton – a Clone Town' in the Autumn newsletter, written by me following a letter from a member, in which I referred to changes to our high street traders. As we all know, many small traders close down in towns the length and breadth of this country and their demise reduces our choice and is a loss to the town setting.

In my view much of this can be laid at the door of the supermarkets who increasingly extend the range of goods on offer resulting in customers sub-consciously picking up items that they might otherwise have bought from the individual trader.

One obvious commodity is the newspaper and magazine and I would urge everyone to compile a mental list of what other goods are available within the town and thereby resist the temptation and use your local shops.

Use them or lose them must be our motto.

Yours truly,

Geoff Nicholas.

## Local List, Part 5

### Normandy Street

In the last four newsletters, I described the first, pilot, stage of the preparation of Alton's Local List, Newtown, north of Basingstoke Road; Mount Pleasant and the rest of Newtown, south of Basingstoke Road; Turk Street to Wilsom Road and Mill Lane; and Anstey Road. In this article, I shall cover the eastern end of Normandy Street, beyond and including Victoria Road. As always in these articles, I am indebted to Jane Hurst for much of the detail.

On the south side, on the corner of Paper Mill Lane, set back amongst trees in the grounds of the old Alton Lodge, stands St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, which was built in 1966, replacing an earlier church in Albert Road at the other end of town. Built of yellow brick in a reinforced-concrete frame, its polygonal shape is distinctive and its tiered copper-clad roof provides a top-lit open interior space. Although one of Alton's best examples of modern architecture, its plan is based on pre-renaissance designs found in northern Italy.

Behind St Mary's, on Paper Mill Lane, next to the railway, can be found Rock Cottage, one of Alton's more curious buildings, a bungalow made from large rough hewn boulders. It is Listed and was built in the 1850s, probably for the gardener of Alton House.

Back to Normandy Street and next to the church, we find the Alton House Hotel. The original central portion is a good example of a 'Regency' villa with an attractive covered veranda on the front. It is a Listed building and was built c 1828. From 1865 to 1897 it was the home of Sir George Brooke-Pechell and then until 1912 of Major General Sir Geoffrey Barton. Late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the house was considerably enlarged with symmetrical side wings, appropriately styled, set back slightly from the main building and a little lower; this is an excellent example of sympathetic enlargement.

Beside the western gate, there is a small stone built lodge building which is now at risk and should also be Listed; it was probably built at the same time as the main house. On the adjacent gatepost a small cast iron plaque serves as a mile-post saying London 47 (miles) and Winton (Winchester) 17.

The other side of York Mews, Nos 51-55 Normandy Street is the site of Central Tyres. The site was originally Enticknap's Alton Motor and Cycle Works, dating back at least to 1906. In the early 1930s, it was taken over by Webber's of Basingstoke (*thanks to Alton's Motor Traders by Norman Pointing, 2007*). At around this time, the present art-deco garage building was built.

On the north side of Normandy Street, opposite the Alton House Hotel, the Alton Infants School started life in 1866 as the Boys' British School - the girls were in Turk Street but moved to new buildings behind the boys' school in 1877. To the east, here is a row of ten detached and semi-detached late Victorian three-storey villas, some of which retain their original attractive front doors and sash windows, as well as all their front gardens.

Victoria Road runs north from Normandy Street opposite the Magistrates' Court and turns to run eastwards in parallel with Normandy Street, more or less beside the old Victoria Foundry (John B Blake, brass and iron-founder, 1866), from which it presumably gets its name. Numbered from the east end, 1-79a and 2-54 are late 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced (occasionally semi-detached) cottages with small front gardens, generally too small to have been converted to car parks. Towards the west end, there are instead mid-20<sup>th</sup> century detached and semi-detached small houses. Nos 56a and 58 are of interest because they are built of local proprietary concrete blocks. To the north of Victoria Road, Clifton Villa in Plevna Place and the terraced cottages 14-22 Spitalfields are interesting late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings.

*Edward Hepper*

## IMPRESSIONS OF A NEWCOMER TO ALTON

Alton is an attractive market town in which people live and work, where the High Street is lively and busy with residents being able to walk along pathways and through alleyways from their homes to the shops, stores and cafes - which is all very convenient and pedestrian-friendly.

***Alton Town has many fine period buildings in good condition which impart an historic feel and there are several new modern buildings and facades that have been made to fit in well with the character of the Town.***

***The Town Centre remains vibrant because limited vehicle access has been allowed and many narrow pedestrian alleys are available for people to come into the Town from the good parking facilities which flank the Town on both sides but are unseen from the High Street.***

The Town has attracted many of the large national chain stores and there still are a number of smaller privately run specialist shops, making for a very satisfactory shopping balance for local residents.

The general impression of the Town to the newcomer is of a prosperous, thriving place broadly well looked after offering most normal requirements.

There is, however, an all too apparent shameful neglect in the proper maintenance of some shabby buildings and municipal provisions which is to be regretted because much of this could be rectified so readily.

Many new shop fronts have contributed effectively to the quality of the Town Centre but there remain a few established premises that seem to have little regard for the detrimental effect that neglect or ill-considered decisions have upon the overall appearance and quality of the Town.

Like the commerce itself, Alton Town needs to compete for good business, so a high standard of appearance and maintenance is desirable to instill confidence so to encourage those considering upgrading premises or moving into the area.

There appear to be great opportunities emerging for the Town with the proposed new Community Centre and, say, a linked new Theatre complex near the Library.

In place of the worn out existing building this complex would benefit greatly from other popular recreational/cultural facilities such as, even, a private squash Club and/or ballet-dance Studio, which might share facilities. This presents an exciting prospect for a coordinated vibrant activities-centre at the very heart of the Town, especially as this particular "island" site would not be suitable for residential use.

It would seem to this newcomer that with a determined thrust made by the parties concerned in this local community it would be feasible to ensure that all is done to put into effect speedily both the modest and the significant improvements that are so very desirable for the overall quality and appearance of Alton Town.

The Alton Society is a well respected civic group and so is in a strong position to influence improvements needed for Alton. This would be made all the more effective if the good folk of the Town and District could be encouraged to become Members and offer their support for its objectives.

*Norman Isham OBE.*

### ***The John Ambrose Award***

#### **CRITERIA**

The award is for the most outstanding building or development in or near Alton completed in the year concerned as at the end of September which satisfies the following criteria:-

Does the development reflect the character and scale of the surrounding area?

Does it blend with, or make a satisfactory contrast to, an adjoining building?

Does it make a positive contribution to its surroundings in terms of:-

- a) Finding a satisfactory use for an otherwise derelict building?
- b) Setting a standard for the eventual improvement of its surroundings?
- c) Providing a point of interest in an otherwise ordinary scene?

Is the standard of workmanship good?

Is the selection of materials pleasing?

Does it reflect a creditable sense of priorities on the part of the owner/developer?

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## **AWARDS HISTORY**

1975: Restoration of No.7 Cross & Pillory Lane. EHDC.

1976: No award made.

1977: Restoration of 'Thatch Cottage', Chawton.  
Mr P Gannon.

1978: Conversion of farm buildings to a dwelling –  
Jordans Farm, Old Odiham Road, Alton.  
Millar Allen Ltd.

1979: Three town houses, Amery Street, Alton.  
Peter Cook Ltd.

1980: Development of Barton End, Alton.  
Holybourne Developments Ltd.

1981: Restoration of 63 High Street, Alton.  
Bradley Trimmer Solicitors.

1982: Enhancement of Kings Pond, Alton.  
Alton Town Council.

1983: New build - Cross & Pillory House, Alton.  
Sherfield Developments Ltd.

1984: Amery Farm Development.  
Holybourne Developments Ltd.

1985: Restoration of 44 High Street, Alton.  
Mr. G. Genziani.

1986: No award made.

1987: Renovation of Town Hall. Alton Town Council.

1988: Restoration of barn, Amery Farm, Alton.  
Holybourne Developments Ltd.

1989: No award made.

1990: Westbrook Walk Development, Alton.  
Westbrook Property Developments.

1991: No award made.

1992: Forum Building, Alton College.  
Hampshire County Council.

1993: Alterations to front and internal restoration, 23 Market  
Street, Alton. M.A.Rose & Son.

1994: Boundary Walls & Landscaping to new Inner Relief  
Road, Alton. H.C.C.

1995: Construction of John Trimmer Walk, Alton.  
Mr Ray Porter.

1996: Restoration of 26 Normandy Street, Alton.  
Mr Guy Radford.

- 1997: Development of Stratford House, Turk Street, Alton.  
Holybourne Developments Ltd.
- 1998: Nursing Home Development, Anstey Road, Alton.  
Brendoncare Foundation.
- 1999: No award made.
- 2000: Development of retail premises with sheltered housing  
above, Market Square.  
Cathedral Homes and Market Place Estates Ltd.
- 2001: No award made.
- 2002: New Development of flats, 9 Anstey Road, Alton.  
Holybourne Developments.
- 2003: Restoration of the former side range of the George Inn  
(16thC) to the rear of 23 High Street, Alton.  
Mr. J Burgess.
- 2004 Restoration and conversion of Historic Barn and Oasts  
together with sympathetic new residential development  
at Will Hall Farm.  
Hampshire Heritage Developments Ltd.
- 2005 Construction of new surgery, Chawton Park Surgery.  
Dr. G T Cubitt and Partners.
- 2006 Construction of School Hall, St Lawrence CE Primary  
School, Amery Hill. Format Milton Architects Ltd.
- 2007 New shopfront windows, Vintage Violet, High Street, Alton.  
Sorina and Daryl Hunter-Cohen.

#### **The new shop front of Vintage Violet, 51 High Street.**

(see photo on front page of printed newsletter)

This is in the town centre conservation area. It picks up the style of the predominantly nineteenth century street with quiet dignity. The pilasters at each side of the façade, the fascia and the consoles are simply yet elegantly designed and the hanging sign is also a well considered feature. The curved shop windows draw one into the entrance in a most welcoming way. Our town centre has suffered through many ill-considered new frontals and lost some fine ones – such as the old Woolworths one – but No 51 shows how good design can exhibit the goods for sale attractively, while respecting the architectural integrity of the building and its neighbours. This is a most welcome example for future refurbishments and new buildings.

Sorina and Daryl Hunter-Cohen are to be congratulated for setting such a good example to the Alton street-scape – exactly the purpose of the John Ambrose Award.

*Edward Hepper*

### ***Award to an Individual for Outstanding Services to the Town***

(continued from Page 1)

**WINNER: LUATH GRANT FERGUSON**

Luath's nomination was based upon the remarkable range of contributions he has made to the educational, cultural and social life of the Alton community and the following is taken from the article featured in the Alton Herald on 28th December 2007:-

When Luath first came to Alton, almost 40 years ago, he and his wife set up Alton Omnibus, a workshop aimed at encouraging young people to become involved in theatre and the arts. In 1973, when Roman artefacts found during digging of the Alton by-pass were being sent to the Surrey Archaeological Society, he was involved in a successful campaign to challenge that action, that also resulted in the setting up of the Alton Society.

The society's first big challenge, under the chairmanship of John Ambrose, was to form a Community Centre in Alton. Luath was responsible for introducing adult education and encouraging youth involvement. He also at this time helped launch one of the first playschemes for pre-school children in the county.

As well as having a spell as a councillor at town and district level, Luath was a teacher at the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital School and then at Yateley School. In 1983 he returned to LMT Hospital School to set up a unit for young special needs children and while applying his teaching and music skills throughout the hospital wards, he developed links particularly with the Mary Rose ward for elderly people.

He went on to fight the eventual closure of the Mary Rose ward, then to secure an alternative provision at Adams Way and eventually took on the huge challenge of resisting the closure of the entire Treloar Hospital.

Under his chairmanship, and with huge local support, the campaign was mounted to purchase the hospital and to establish a ground-breaking orthopaedic teaching hospital, combined with a small business park for companies specialising in orthopaedics, but the NHS refused to sell.

When it was announced that the hospital was to be demolished, a petition was raised with 26,000 signatures in less than three weeks and the Alton Society joined in to help fight the proposal. Despite a bid to English Heritage to have the hospital buildings "listed" and a five-day public inquiry, the NHS went on to win the right to demolish the hospital and build on the site.

Together with the then Chairman of the Alton Society, Geoff Nicholas, and others, Luath helped set up the LMTH Memorial Fund (that the Alton Society still administers).

Luath was also instrumental in running a separate campaign to save Bushy Leaze which was eventually found a new home next to Anstey Junior School.

As further recognition of Luath's achievements, on the same week that he was presented with the Alton Society Award, he also was named runner-up in the Classic FM Music Teacher of the Year Award for his current work at Dove House School in Basingstoke for pupils with special needs. According to its Headteacher, Luath's "inspiration has truly made a difference".

Over the years in Alton, Luath has clearly worked hard to make a difference and it is fitting that he is the first recipient of this new Award.

*Jan Nicholas*

Editor's Note: Nominations are now invited for 2008's Award to an Individual for Outstanding Services to the Town. Please give your main reasons for your nomination — a short statement of 50 to 100 words would suffice or a more detailed summary is acceptable—and send it to Edward Hepper (contact details on Page 12). Deadline 31st July.

A reminder of the prime eligibility criterion: to acknowledge the personal contribution made by an appropriate individual towards work, voluntary or otherwise, that has been of outstanding value to the Alton community. For this purpose, the Committee believes that 'services' should be interpreted in a very broad sense, so as to recognise a record of achievement related to one or more of the Society's principal aims. These cover: **promoting the appropriate development of Alton and its amenities; stimulating interest in the past, present, and future of the town; and working for the enhancement of local features of particular historical, cultural, or aesthetic importance.**

## **GUEST SOCIETY - Alton Natural History Society**

Our Society will celebrate its 60th birthday in April 2008, a little later than the anniversary of its inauguration on 8th March 1948. The first meeting was held in the Curtis Museum on the initiative of Mr W.H. Curtis and Mr Warner. 24 people, all local, attended the first meeting and included Mr Atkins who for many years wrote Nature Notes for the Alton Herald, Miss Caesar, a keen botanist, Mr Keel, whose interest was in birds, Mr Luke, the then Headmaster of Amery Hill School and Mr Robinson, a lepidopterist and inventor of the moth trap which works by attracting moths to a bright light. Early members who have continued for the (almost) 60 years are Mike Trapaud, the first Treasurer, and Arthur Jollands.

In the early years the Society maintained a small seasonal display in the Museum, restored its butterfly collection and held several indoor meetings there in the Winter. Outdoor meetings soon followed and were mainly held at venues which were within walking distance or accessible by public transport and a Junior Section was soon started.

Over the years, the Society has developed and expanded and now holds Indoor Meetings, usually illustrated talks, fortnightly throughout the Winter, and Outdoor Meetings approximately every two to three weeks in the Summer.

**It holds Recording Meetings which are Surveys of the wildlife of a site where there are threats of development or where it is thought advisable to monitor progress and comments on wildlife. It is these activities, which extend to approximately a ten-mile radius of Alton, which give our two Societies their most obvious common interest.**

Members' interests range from the more popular ones of Flowers, Birds and Insects to more specialist subjects of Fungi, Mosses and Lichens and all are keen to share their knowledge with those who are less expert in their particular fields and with beginners. So most Field Meetings cover a wide range.

Our meetings in the past year have included Field Meetings at Home Farm, Burkham (the Woodland Trust site), Chawton Park Wood and Alice Holt Forest, recording at Weston Common and a Moth morning at which the catches in three moth traps run in the Alton area were compared as part of National Moth Night. Winter meetings in the current programme include talks on an Antarctic Adventure and the Effects of Climate Change on Biodiversity. Winter Outdoor meetings are often based at a pub. Meetings are usually advertised in the What's On Diary in the Alton Herald and visitors are always welcome.

*Penny Raynor*

*Chair, Alton Natural History Society*

## ALTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY WINTER PROGRAMME 2008

Venue unless stated otherwise—Friends Meeting House, Church Street, Alton

Fri Feb 1st	“Identifying Soil Types”.	An illustrated talk by Danial Winchester, the ecology consultant for the Hindhead A3 road project.
Fri Feb 15th	AGM.	Followed by “Birding in China”, an illustrated talk by Ted Raynor.
Fri Feb 29th	“Anglers Monitoring Their Rivers”.	An illustrated talk by angler Peter Francis.
Sat Mar 8th	Frensham Little Pond for birds.	Main car park, SU858417. 2 pm. Leader: Steve Mansfield. 07786 060 289.
Fri Mar 14th	“Antarctic Adventure”	An illustrated talk by Kath Mitchell.
Fri Mar 28th	“The effects of climate change on biodiversity: work of the BRANCH project.	A presentation by Alan Williams Principal Environment Officer of HCC.

## FLOOD MEADOWS

On retirement of Kimberley Muir we now have a new Natural Environment Working Group Team Leader in the form of Martin Gibbs who has great plans to carry this important work forward. Martin will be regularly briefing Mike Heelis, who is a Society Committee member and also participates in the work parties, so that what happens on the ground with the work party remains connected to the direction of the Society.

We saw initial implementation of Martin's plans at the December 2007 work party in relation to the process of thinning out the willow trees which are slowly taking over the entire water cress bed area. Mr Andrew Murray, a local tree surgeon, kindly offered to assist with this by cutting down many of the thicker trunk trees which required clearance and were situated in standing water. This he did on the Friday prior to the

third Sunday in December we always work. In addition the Town Council agreed to shred the removed trees if the group could move them out of the water in the cress beds and onto firm standing so that they could be fed through shredding machine at a later date by Town Council staff.

The December work party was therefore a very busy one with volunteers working hard to remove and reposition these cut trees and also at the same time carry out much needed mulching around the base of various Trees for Life trees. The mince pies and mulled wine provided by Martin after the work party were therefore most welcome.

This process of thinning will continue for the January and possibly February work parties in an effort to ensure that control is maintained over their growth and the whole area is not taken over by these invasive trees.

During the Alton Yuletide Fair, the Alton Society had a stand in the Assembly Rooms alongside the Craft Fair. We were heartened by the high level of interest shown in the work of the Flood Meadows Conservation work and several people put their names forward as volunteers to assist. There were some of these who attended the December work party and we were very pleased to see them. I encourage all members who know of anyone who cares about Alton and is prepared to contribute towards the conservation process to come along on the third Sunday of any month at 10:00 am. sharp. We meet at the Flood Meadows end of Tanhouse Lane and you will be given a very warm welcome. It would be even more useful if you could give advance notice that you intend to come along, on 01420 82780.

Furthermore, Martin is working to reinvigorate the proposed Viewing Platform proposal for Flood Meadows which received much attention last year. Advice is currently being sought from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Hampshire and Isle of White Trust on materials to use and on benchmarking of other similar projects etc. This is very much work in progress from the planning perspective and we shall keep you briefed on what happens next.

*Mike Heelis*

## ***Alton Town Design Statement***

The Alton Town Design Statement has now been completed in draft form and submitted in November 2007 to East Hants District Council at the Community Forum and the Council are now considering it for implementation as non statutory planning guidance and then from 2010 after the new Core Strategy and planning process has been implemented as a supplementary planning document. A considerable amount of effort has been invested to get us to where we are now and most of this has been done by volunteers on a non paid basis. We have taken considerable heart from quoted examples of where Design Statements have influenced planning decisions the closest to us of which is a decision taken recently in Four Marks.

The current draft with EHDC is at 9c version and the working group is now putting the finishing touches to various maps and photographs that will go in with the document. EHDC has already promised to support the design and printing costs from the already successfully engaged Arrowhead Printers in Alton. In short the Town Design Statement is a flag ship project being defined under the umbrella of the Alton Town Partnership with significant input from the Alton Society. With Alton growing all of the time and new developments plus refurbishments going on at a very high rate implementation of the document which reflects the views of Altonians is urgently required. For those of you who cannot recall the purpose of the Alton Town Design Statement this is document with the following purpose:

- To foster a better appreciation of the town and its setting, both by its own residents and by those in the surrounding area for whom it also provides a focal point;
- To articulate the views of the local community about the town's future development;
- and, most specifically, To generate appropriate design guidelines to influence the planning and implementation of such development.
- First promoted by the Countryside Commission in 1996
- Recognised by Government

For anyone who would like to view the current draft then please go to the internet - <http://www.alton-in-partnership.org/indtds.html> or contact 01420 82780.

*Mike Heelis*

***Draft - for Approval at the 2008 AGM -***  
**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**held at The Maltings, Alton**  
**on Sat 17th November 2007 at 10 am**

## **PRELIMINARIES**

Reg Aldhous (Chairman) welcomed the Mayor, Councillor Robyn Fitzer, and some twenty members to the meeting.

Before the commencement of formal business, the Chairman made the inaugural presentation of The Alton Society Award for Outstanding Services to the Town. The recipient was Luath Grant Ferguson, whom he commended for a remarkable range of contributions to the educational, cultural, and social life of the Alton community. The Society's John Ambrose award, relating to a particularly meritorious architectural development or redevelopment, was then presented by Edward Hepper. The winners were Sorina and Daryl Hunter-Cohen, for the new shop frontage to 'Vintage Violet' in Alton High Street. A presentation was also made to Jim Dickinson, in recognition of his continuing and valuable work in the domain of local tree wardenship.

## **FORMAL BUSINESS**

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

These had been received from Jane Hurst, Keith Mentzel, and James Willis.

### **2 Approval of Previous Minutes**

Minutes of the 36<sup>th</sup> AGM, held on 11 November 2006, were agreed to be a true record, as proposed by Jim Dickinson and seconded by Alec Baker.

### **3 Matters Arising**

None.

### **4 Chairman's Report**

This took the form of a 'Review of the Year' offered as part of the written Management Committee Report dated 9 November 2007, copies of which had been made available to all those attending [Review is formally annexed to the present Minutes]. In presenting this to the AGM, the Chairman briefly emphasized that it covered a year of vigorous activity in such areas as the monitoring of planning applications, the care of Flood Meadows, and the extensive contribution that members had made towards the preparation of the new Alton Town Design Statement. This Report elicited no questions.

### **5 Treasurer's Report**

A detailed written statement of accounts for the year ending 30 September 2007 (confirmed as acceptable by the Independent Examiner on 24 October) had been prepared by Jan Nicholas, and copies had been made available to all those attending. She commented that the Committee had continued its policy of heightening efforts to 'market' the Society, and that these had included expenditure on reprinting the publicity brochure

in an updated version. The Treasurer also drew attention to the fact that the income and expenditure totals for the Natural Environment Group were now being formally presented as an integral part of the main Account (though on this occasion a supplementary and more detailed breakdown of the figures was also being provided for the information of members). She noted that at the final accounting date the Society's current assets within its unrestricted fund had amounted to a broadly satisfactory figure of £7,936.50. Her Report elicited no questions. The Chairman warmly thanked the Treasurer for her stewardship of the finances over the past year.

## **6 Adoption of Annual Accounts**

The accounts were adopted, as proposed by Mike Heelis and seconded by Nick Carey-Thomas.

## **7 Election of Officers and Committee**

The Chairman confirmed that, after three years in office, he would now be standing down. As there had been no nomination for a replacement, the outgoing Committee had already made provisional plans for reversion to the device of a rotating chairmanship, as permitted by the Society's constitution.

Reg Aldhous further reported that Geoff Nicholas and John Chaplin were also leaving the Committee at this stage, and he expressed to both of them the Society's appreciation for their long spells of valuable service.

He announced that Jan Nicholas was willing to be re-nominated for the office of Treasurer, and the meeting endorsed her re-election, as proposed by himself and seconded by Alec Baker.

Brian Alexander, Mike Biddiss, Mike Heelis, and Edward Hepper were all willing to accept re-nomination as ordinary Committee members, and the meeting confirmed their re-election as well, on a proposal from the Chairman that was seconded by Nick Carey-Thomas. It was further noted that James Willis, who had been co-opted to the Committee during the year, had now consented to make himself available for election: this was similarly endorsed, as proposed by Edward Hepper and seconded by Mike Heelis. Finally, on a proposal from Jim Dickinson that was seconded by Edward Hepper, Nick Carey-Thomas (a previous Committee member) was elected to make a welcome return.

## **8 Appointment of Independent Examiner of the Accounts**

The Treasurer highlighted the valuable assistance that had been received from Jack Webb. Members registered their thanks, and agreed to her proposal (seconded by John Chaplin) that he be reappointed as Independent Examiner.

## **9 Other Previously Notified Business**

None.

Before the closure of formal business at 10.35am, Edward Hepper expressed to Reg Aldhous the thanks of the whole Society for the leadership that he had given over the past three years. These sentiments were most warmly endorsed by all those members present.

## **CONCLUDING SESSION**

After the conclusion of formal proceedings and a break for coffee, Reg Aldhous announced that, in the context of the improvised arrangements for a rotating chairmanship, Edward Hepper had agreed to take first turn in this role for a limited period.

Members then enjoyed an illustrated talk on 'The Creation of the Alton Town Design Statement', the draft of which was currently being considered by East Hampshire District Council. This was given by Mike Heelis and Edward Hepper, members of the relevant Working Group which had been operating under the general auspices of the Alton Town Partnership and with the full support of the Society.

*Mike Biddiss*

## **Join the Alton Society Now - have a say and a role in the future of our town**

The membership subscription is £10 per household from 1st October 2007  
Ask for a leaflet for its standing order form and to agree to the subscription being treated as Gift Aid.

Contact our Treasurer: Jan Nicholas, 10 Barton End, Alton, GU34 1LD.  
Tel.: 01420 88411.

***For existing members who already pay by standing order, please note that, if you have not done so already, you will need to instruct your bank to increase the amount payable to £10.  
Thank you.***

### **Contact Details**

#### **CHAIRMAN—on rotation as follows:-**

**Edward Hepper** (Nov '07—Feb '08)

**Uplands, 61 Queens Road, Alton, Hants, GU34 1JG**

**01420 544176**

**Mike Heelis** (March—May)

**Jan Nicholas** (June—Sept)

**Nick Carey-Thomas** (Sept—Nov)

**Jan Nicholas (Treasurer & Newsletter Editor)**

**01420 88411**

#### **OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:-**

**Norman Isham (Coopted)**

**01420 542114**

#### **Built Environment**

**Edward Hepper**

**Mike Biddiss**

**01420 543132**

**James Willis**

**01420 83416**

**Nick Carey-Thomas**

**01420 82195**

**Town Design Statement**

**Mike Heelis  
01420 82780**

**Edward Hepper; Mike Biddiss; Nick Carey-Thomas**

**Natural Environment**

**Mike Heelis**

**TREE WARDEN:-**

**Jim Dickinson**

**01420 84729**

**(a members only service)**

Tribute to Member—Arthur Blackham  
(who died on 2nd January 2008)

Arthur will be sorely missed for his useful and well-expressed contributions that he made on planning development and natural environment matters.

***ENDS***