

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Christmas lights switch on was well attended and the sight of nine Burrell engines on the Market Place was one to behold. With so much going on that evening the town came alive and I was heartened to hear comments from visitors such as 'Thetford punches above its weight with its events' and 'Thetford really has a thriving community spirit'.

The Abbey Barns inquiry was held in November and may I thank all those Society members who were involved and whatever the outcome I think the Society is held in high regard for the efforts made. (see Environment Committee report). Another decision the Secretary of State has to make is that with regard to the proposed unitary council for Norfolk which would abolish the district council tier of local government in the county. However the lack of time left in this parliament may mean this does not come to fruition.

The Thetford Healthy Town launch in September was followed by publicity relating to the projects. To find out more visit www.thetfordhealthytown.co.uk.

The ideas for the proposed town centre college on the Anchor & Bus Station site will be displayed along with other Moving Thetford Forward projects at an open exhibition in the Carnegie Room at the end of January. The funding for this project is now tied in with the idea of creating an Academy based on three sites namely the two high schools and this town centre site which is being referred to as the Thetford Forum. Subject to funding, the Academy will open on the two high school sites in September 2010 with rebuilding of the Charles Burrell site and lesser works at Rosemary Musker to follow. The building of the 'Forum' site will not be open before 2013. The moving of the bus station to the Cosy Carpets site in St Nicholas Street is still being pursued.



Tom Paine 200 Weekend, King Street, June

Traffic and parking issues have been raised by many about the use of the 'Forum' site and at present no alternative parking has been earmarked. A transportation study is being carried out but I do not believe there are any quick fixes to transportation issues that town's folk are already well aware of.

The Town Council has acquired the redundant St Peter's Church and a questionnaire with regard to potential uses will be distributed in *About Thetford* in January followed by a follow up public meeting in February with a view to seeking funding to bring the building into community use.

My final thank you is to John Weeks and the Tom Paine 200 committee for delivering such an ambitious programme of events during the year culminating with the autumn series of lectures and the well attended community play. It is hoped following the interest in the play and the forthcoming Dad's Army stage show in June that some form of drama group can be rekindled for the town. A DVD of the celebrations will be launched at a special screening on January 18th. All welcome. Copies will be available from the Tourist Information Centre (01842) 751975.

The Society did not produce a calendar this year but we are working with the Thetford Arts Centre to run a competition for local artists to enter scenes of Thetford for inclusion in a calendar for next year. Contact the Arts Centre on (01842)766599, call in upstairs at the Guildhall or visit www.thetfordartscentre.org.uk. Competition closes towards the end of March if you wish to submit an entry.

Future Activities

Meetings

All at the United Reformed Church at 7.30pm unless stated

Jan 5th Face to Face - [Old School Hall, Thetford Grammar School](#).

Thomas Paine (Colin Orbell) is interviewed by John Freeman (Mike Brindle) in Wendy Serjeant's well-received play previously performed during the Tom Paine 200

Celebrations.

Feb 2nd Speaker to be announced

Mar 2nd Breckland Wildlife - Mr Stephens

Apr 6th The Moon - Rod Telfer

May 4th Edwardian Norfolk - David Grimes

Outings

No outings have yet been arranged. The Imperial War Museum at Kennington and Buckingham Palace have been suggested along with Thursford next year. A charity Cheese & Wine evening is planned for March. Anyone interested in trips please contact Danny Jeffrey (01842) 753770.

Jan 2nd Christmas Social, Carnegie Room, 7.30pm. Tickets £10 from Danny Jeffrey

Jan 18th Large screen presentation of Tom Paine 200 Celebrations DVD. Williamson Hall, Thetford Grammar School 7.30pm Entrance Free

Jan 30th - Thomas Paine Dinner, Bell Hotel. Tickets £23 from Stuart Wright.

Other Forthcoming Events in Thetford

January 29th & 30th - Moving Thetford Forward Exhibition of plans. The Carnegie Room

March 5th & 6th - Film shows in the Guildhall as part of Breckland Film Festival.

Contact Tourist Information (01842) 751975 for details.

ACTIVITIES REPORT

Meetings

The AGM in September was well attended. The committee were re-elected en bloc and the membership subscription left unchanged. The speaker, George Pipe spoke about the bells of St Peter's citing that they had never had to be tuned.



Bell Tower, St Peter's Church

In October Len Hedges spoke about his new book about Henry Cabell & Susannah Holmes who were among the first convicts transported from Norwich gaol to Australia. In November Stuart Hobday spoke about Harriet Martineau, the nineteenth century author and campaigner. Society member Roger Smith talked in December about the Coastguard Service its history and his own time as a member.

Outings & Events

There were no outings during the quarter, although attempts to run some were made.

The Sausage Supper was successful in raising £250 for the Children's Hospices. The quiz was won by the Dad's Army contingent.

ENVIRONMENT

Since the last newsletter and the publication of the Thetford Magazine, most of the work of the Committee has revolved around the Public Inquiry over the **Abbey Barns** which was held on the 10th and 11th November. The outcome will be known on or before the 19th February 2010.

We feel that the Thetford Society's team of (in order of appearance) David Woods, Terry Lamb, Ed Chambers, Tony Lewis, Pat Pearson, Mike Brindle, Corinne Fulford, Stuart Wright and I presented a robust argument in a professional manner. Together with Anthony Rossi CBE and Frank Kelsall, representing the Ancient Monuments Society, we consider that we did all that was possible to present our case against the residential conversion of the Abbey Barns.

We would like to thank all those who contributed as well as the excellent support of our members and other residents of Thetford who attend and supported us.

St. Mary the Less continues to deteriorate but we are not giving up on this significant Church building. Committee members have met with a representative from English Heritage and we have a partnership plan to initially get an urgent works notice issued. Basically, this is to stop further deterioration especially to the roof over the north aisle. English Heritage could provide a substantial proportion of the costs via a grant but it requires Breckland Council to initiate the notice.

In the long term, there are moves afoot to raise funds in order to convert the building into a community facility.

Over a year ago the Society and Town Council joined forces to persuade Breckland's Development Control Committee to save the **Cottage Hospital** from demolition. We were successful and now a new scheme has been drawn up which incorporates a substantial (old) part of the Hospital. The scheme can be viewed on-line on Breckland's web-site but basically it retains the Hospital footprint as it was in the 1920s, the recent, flat-roofed extensions will be removed and the building converted into four flats. At the rear and at the east side there are plans for nine terraced houses. With reservations about the lack of sufficient parking spaces and the possible impact on the Snooker Club we consider that the proposed scheme is worthy of our support.



Proposed new Power Station

The siting of a new **Power Station** on a conspicuous plot to the north of the town has caused objections from residents in Croxton as well as from our committee. We see it as the right idea but in the wrong place. Norfolk County Council will be the planning authority which determines where this **Power Station** will go so we will campaign further when the planning application is due to be heard.