

1 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



The long awaited proposals from the consultants involved in the Moving Thetford Forward Day on 8th February will be displayed in the Library during the week commencing 20th June. Further information about the consultation can be obtained from www.movingthetfordforward.com. Our initial thoughts are that whilst providing a framework for debate, further issues need to be considered before these indicative ideas are taken as gospel. I would urge as many of you as possible, to feedback your thoughts and feelings to the consultants as it is you and your families who will living here in the future, long after our consultants have disappeared into the sunset. I say this as I believe some of the short term fixes of infilling with residential properties may preclude the use of sites for commercial / leisure facilities in the future. The town is still growing and is scheduled to grow further so we will need a town centre to cope with this greater demand. Car parking is being removed for some of the projects but there seems few proposals for alternative parking on the periphery of the town centre. If the town is to be regenerated then a more attractive centre will generate further visitors. The plans for the Burrell Museum are thought provoking but where is the museum going? The demolition of the Carnegie Room appears a fait accompli with the only replacement building being little more than the size of a house, tacked onto the rear of the Guildhall and the remainder of the site given over to housing. This is clearly not a replacement function room. I stand by my opinion that the town needs a function room equal in size to the Carnegie Room which can cater for all types of uses such as theatre productions, film screenings, conferences, parties etc. The size issue has been reinforced recently by the Mayor's Ball in April, the new Mayor's Reception in June and even the Thetford Society's annual Christmas Social. Without the Carnegie, these functions would have to be downsized as the Guildhall is too small to cope with the numbers involved. The proposals are also silent on the Bus Station / Anchor site, is there already an agreed agenda for this area or is uncertainty regarding the location of the Bus Station mean little can be done in the

short term? The Kwik Save site is another unknown to be addressed. On a more positive note the redevelopment of the Riverside Walk precinct can only be good news. Whilst it is accepted that any proposals will need to have sufficient profit in them for developers to become interested, I believe we as a town should give some guidance in what proposals are given the green light, so please encourage as many residents as possible to take a look at the plans and make their feelings known.

Keystone has now moved into their new headquarters, The Limes in Bridge Street and has purchased Riversdale from Breckland Council. The Keystone Enterprise Factory, in Brunel Way has now been refurbished and is providing office and training facilities. The Keystone Innovation Centre had its amended plans passed by Breckland and is now being constructed with a completion date in late spring 2006. The adjoining Healthy Living Centre has been given the go ahead by the local Primary Care Trust and work on this should commence in late summer 2005 with a completion date of October 2006. The contract for the PFI scheme for leisure facilities is rumoured to be nearing completion and a proposed start date of August 2005 is being spoken of. It was refreshing to hear that Breckland's new leadership commenting that decision to follow the PFI route seemed right at the time (plans were first put forward in 1999) but if the decision were made today a different option would have been pursued.

The Thetford Society in conjunction with the Ancient House Museum Outreach Project has been successful in obtaining a Heritage Lottery fund grant to hold a Community Archaeological Week starting 22nd August 2005. The location will be the grounds of Redcastle School which adjoins the raised bank which formed the town's south western boundary in Saxon times. In those times a ditch and raised bank with a palisade would have marked the boundary. The proposed format is of an excavation carried out by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit with related family orientated activities such as handling of related artefacts and educational material. At the end of the working day a site archaeologist will talk about the day's work and finds. We hope that an illustrated talk about the project can be given to the Society at a later date. Please watch the local press for further details and timings nearer the time.

The AGM is being held on September 6th and as usual, nominations are invited for all positions on the committee, including the Chair.

2 ENVIRONMENT



An appeal has been made to the Secretary of State in respect of The Anchor Hotel as the application to demolish and redevelop the site has not been determined by Breckland Council. We hope that all previous representations will be taken into account and a strategic view is taken of this site in connection with the proposed bus station redevelopment and other proposed developments in the town centre. If the bus station were to be redeveloped then the Anchor having a garden down to the river would be an attractive option. I feel however that the owner does not wish, for this familiar landmark to generations that have passed through the town, to be preserved. The town has a shortage of hotel bed provision and the Anchor also has a popular bar and sizeable function room much used by clubs and societies as well as being a popular venue for weddings and social events. The shortage of hotel provision is borne out by a proposed new hotel on the outskirts of town near the bypass.

The new contractors, SERCO recently appointed by Breckland got off to a slow start once the growing season arrived but I believe they are making inroads into the backlog of grass cutting. A recent comment by the new Breckland Chief executive that the contractors are paid on results may be wishful thinking as I suspect a lot of the areas which require tidying up will not be specified in their contract. However our Breckland Councillors have been issued with cameras to highlight eyesores they wish to be cleared up and we have had appeals in the local paper that the public are encouraged to report eyesores to Breckland on 01362 656878. The Town Council have been busy pressure washing the pedestrian areas, repainting the street furniture and spraying the weeds in the town centre. However I believe that no one organisation is going to be the answer to the cleaning up of the town. There seems a fresh impetus for Breckland and the Town to work together but the inability to remove the dead tree outside the Anchor by the Town Bridge and tidy the grassed area (once a flower bed!) and the crumbling state of the Haling Path are but two examples where issues do not seem to be able to find a solution. Street lights are another area where our contractors need to be shown the light (or the broken ones). Please keep reporting complaints otherwise our public bodies will believe that all is satisfactory!

We have been informed that the town council is pursuing the idea of replacing the old town sign with a replica and displaying the old one inside one of our public buildings. The reinstatement of the sign has been a request of the Society for some time and it is pleasing that our campaigning seems to be bearing fruit.

3 ACTIVITIES REPORT

Meetings

In April Alan Davison spoke about 'Mediaeval Thetford'. In May Inspector Peacock updated us on 'Policing Thetford'. In June Dr Rogerson told us about 'Recent Archaeological Finds in Thetford'. All three meetings were well attended.

Outings

There were trips to the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds to see 'Relatively Speaking' and a backstage tour, to the ILPH at

Snetterton, to the Tate Britain Gallery for Whistler, Turner & Monet exhibition, to Elgood's brewery at Wisbech and to the Beth Chatto garden at Elmstead Market near Colchester. The trip to Felbrigg & Cromer was cancelled due to lack of support.

4 FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Meetings – United Reformed Church at 7.30pm unless stated

July 4th - Dr Hancock, "High jinks" in the twenties

August - No Meeting

Sept 6th - AGM & Susan Glossop, Thetford Town Manager

Oct 4th - Becky Hellard & William Nunn, Breckland Council

Oct 20th - Heather Wallis, Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Thetford (Methodist Church Hall 7.30pm)

Outings

July 14th - Elgood's brewery & garden. Cost £12.
Depart Bus Station 11am

July 25th - Lowestoft Air Show.
Depart Bus Station 9am

Aug 14th - Whipsnade Zoo. Cost £23 (incl. entrance).
Depart Bus Station 8am

Sept 3rd - Rochester & Chatham. Cost £10.
Depart Bus Station 8am

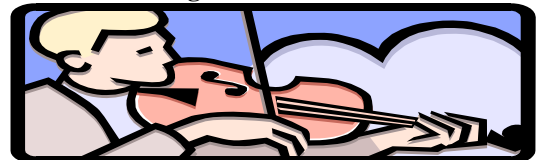
Social Events

The May barbecue on the William Gentle Land raised £237 for the Elderly Lunch Club. We have been asked to pass on our thanks to all who helped and supported.

June 26th - Strawberry Tea, King's House Gardens
Cost £3.50. 3pm.

Anyone interested in these please contact Danny Jeffrey (01842) 753770 to book your place.

Other Forthcoming events in Thetford



June 18th - Colin Swaep and Cawston Band Concert, Carnegie Room 7.30pm

July 1st - Alice in Wonderland, King's House 7.30pm

July 17th - Breckland Band, King's House 2.30pm

Aug 5th-7th - Thetford Through The Ages Event

Contact Tourist Information for details

Aug 5th - 100 years of Music. Carnegie Room 7.30pm

Aug 6th - Living History display, Romans, Vikings, Mediaeval + more

Aug 7th - Antique & Car Show, Boudicca story telling, Poetry reading + more

Aug 21st - Cambridge Jazz, King's House 2.30pm

Aug 22nd-26th - Community Archaeological Week
Redcastle School. Watch press for details.

Sept 4th - Harling & Bridgham Band,
King's House. 2.30pm

Sept 9th-11th - Heritage Open Days

Contact Tourist Information for details

The Limes, Riversdale, Guided walk of the Priory. Guided walk of old pubs of Thetford