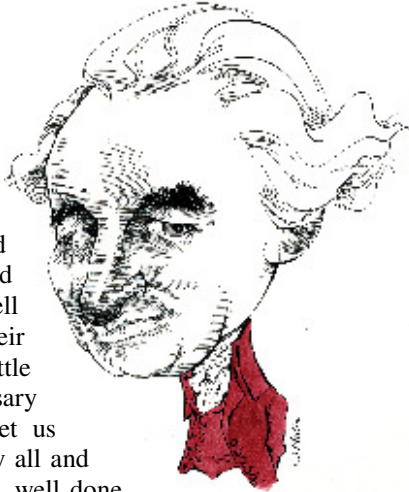


CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Thomas Paine Bicentennial weekend was a great success and congratulations should be given to John Weeks and to all those involved. The town was buzzing for the Saturday events and with so many things to see, visitors were spoilt for choice. The weather on Sunday morning was disappointing meaning many did not share the events on Melford Common and Castle Park however the rain abated for the battle re-enactment which was well received. The local TV were notable by their absence once more. There has been a little coverage in the national press about the anniversary but little about Thetford. However do not let us detract from the weekend which was enjoyed by all and showed once again Thetford can put on a show, well done again to John and the team.



The Thetford Forum meeting took place in April and allowed residents to exchange information with the various tiers of local government. I am a great believer in these meetings, whilst many leave frustrated about an apparent lack of action, it gives our decision makers a good barometer of public opinion on various matters. Hopefully these will continue and we can encourage others to attend. Stuart Wilson and I submitted a further set of photographs of matters requiring attention around the town to the Thetford Task Force and have had a number of issues resolved but many still remain ongoing. In the meantime please keep reporting streetlights, litter, fly tipping, graffiti, potholes, dangerous pavements etc.

The Thetford Area Action Plan has its examination in public in July and the crucial issue regarding the Stone Curlew 'Buffer Zone' will be considered.

Following the confirmation that funding is still in place, the new Thetford College looks likely on the Anchor & Bus Station site. As I have indicated in the past I have reservations on the use of the site for this purpose and we have been told that there will not be enough room on the site to teach all the courses that the college will look to deliver meaning teaching will have to be split between that site and the High Schools. Traffic and parking issues have been raised by many about the use of the site and at present no alternative parking has been earmarked. This means we will have no parking of any note the south side of the river, meaning all traffic will have to use London Road to access the town centre. We have been informed a transportation study will be undertaken so hopefully this will result in an improved pedestrian crossing of Bury Road at the end of Bridge Street. In order for the scheme to proceed the Bus Station needs to move to the old Cosy Carpets site in St Nicholas Street. As has been reported in the press, acquisition of the land required will have to be made using compulsory purchase.

The Town Council are in the process of acquiring the redundant St Peter's Church and should be applauded for saving this iconic building for the town. Minor repairs will be required to ensure the building is watertight and the long term use has yet to be finalised but the good news is that it will not be allowed to go the way of St Mary the Less.

Finally, a reminder that subscriptions are due on 1st September. If you were able to bring a cheque along to the AGM this would be greatly appreciated by our Membership Secretary, Mrs Pat Pearson.

Future Activities

Meetings

All at the United Reformed Church at 7.30pm unless stated

Jul 7th Norfolk Railways - Gerald Saviour

Aug 4th A Remarkable Airman - John Bloomfield

Sep 1st AGM

Outings & Events

Aug 1st Barbeque at the Watermill, St Audreys

Aug 15th The Cromer Pier Show Cost £24 incl Bus

Dec 15th Thursford Xmas Show Cost £33

All on first come, first served basis. Contact Danny Jeffrey 01842 753770 to express an interest.

Other Travel News

Bus Pass holders can still use them for coach services to Gt Yarmouth, Cromer/Sheringham & Lowestoft all for a booking fee of £1. For details, contact the TIC (01842) 751975.

Other Events in Thetford

Jul 15th & 16th Face to Face with Thomas Paine - Thetford Grammar School 7.30pm

Aug 8th - 15th Thetford Arts Centre 'Upstairs Comes Down' - Large Court, The Guildhall

Aug 30th Georgian Cricket Match - Thetford Cricket Club

Sep 12th & 13th Heritage Open Days

The Thomas Paine events continue, with a series of talks from September to November and the Community Play - Citizen of the World on October 31st.

For further information, contact the TIC (01842) 751975 or visit www.tompaine200.org.uk.

The Ancient House Museum has a series of afternoon talks of local interest. For details contact (01842) 752599.

ACTIVITIES REPORT

Meetings

The talks have continued to be well attended, the Breckland Society let us down in April but the spot was more than adequately taken by our own David Osborne. A very popular talk on 'The Way We Were' was given by David Grimes in May and in June, Digby Smith talked about living in Moscow in the 1990's.

Outings

We don't know whether it is the credit crunch or general lack of interest, particularly among new members, but there does not seem much enthusiasm for either outings or social events this year. We have had to cancel the proposed trips to Hatfield House and the Norfolk Show.

There are still 10 seats available for the Cromer Pier Show on August 15th.



There are over 30 seats available for Thursford on December 15th.



As usual, contact Danny Jeffrey on 01842 753770 for tickets or more information.

The Strawberry Tea was well supported and many thanks for all those involved.

ENVIRONMENT

The main news concerns the **Abbey Barns'** site. As most would have read in the local papers, the Secretary of State has decided to 'call in' the residential development application. This means that the application will be taken to a Public Inquiry sometime before the 3rd December. A Planning Inspector will then make a recommendation either to support the application or not.

Getting to this stage is a major feat but the pressure from the residents of Thetford needs to be maintained. When the Inspector is assigned the case he/she starts with a blank canvas so that he/she is completely impartial. The Inspector will not see all those letters of objection to Breckland and requests to GO-East. We now have to write again, this time to the Inspector (see below) reiterating our thoughts and reasons why a residential scheme is so utterly inappropriate for these unique historic buildings. The Society will produce a letter with the main arguments outlined. This can be copied or sent by our members. If you haven't yet received one then please contact Stuart Wilson on 751770.

Finally, on this topic, we intend to be represented at the Inquiry but that does not prevent anyone else appearing as long as you make a request to the Inspector. There will be representatives from the Amenity Societies such as the Ancient Monuments Society who have huge experience in such matters and they have the same views as we have as to the future of the site.

Planning Inspectorate information: Three copies of your letter should be sent by **28th July** to: **The Planning Inspectorate (FAO Nadia Hussain), 4/03 Kite Wing, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, BRISTOL, BS15 4SR.**

Quote: Appeal Ref. Nos.: APP/F2605/V/09/2107419 and APP/F2605/V/09/2107417

Many thanks for your continued support.

St Mary the Less is still deteriorating despite Mr Gayton hinting that Breckland would receive a substantial grant from English Heritage to carry out essential repairs. We will continue to press for Breckland's Conservation Officer to carry out his duties and to help save this Grade II* listed building.

Digby Smith and his group of volunteers have been busy improving the **River Corridor** by cutting back invasive undergrowth and intrusive tree suckers. We are all extremely grateful for their time and energy to make this part of Thetford even more attractive. Anyone wishing to offer assistance should contact Digby Smith on (01842) 760369.

We still await news of the **Cottage Hospital**. Fencing has secured the site but NHS Norfolk have yet to decide on a future use.

Plans are afoot to demolish the distinctive building housing **Boughton's Printers** in Station Road. At time of going to press we have been told but not had it confirmed that Carter's Builders are planning to use the site and other areas of land in the vicinity for redevelopment. Vehicular access either via Station Road or Croxton Road will be the major issue for any development. Unfortunately, the building which has been a landmark in this part of our town for over 100 years is not listed and does not fall within the Conservation Area.

Plans for a new Bio-Mass **Power Station** on the Mundford Road have been put forward and whilst we support the idea of renewable energy we have concerns over the possible visual intrusion of the facility. Especially as the proposed 'Thetford Loop' crossing the A11 would have the facility directly in front of it.

Thetford was cited by English Heritage in the Sunday Times as a historic town where its character has been allowed to be spoiled by the incursion of satellite dishes and UPVC windows. We welcome the debate and hope measures can be taken to arrest the erosion of the streetscape. We understand Breckland Council is preparing a conservation area appraisal to inform householders on appropriate repairs and improvements to their properties.

The **Market Place** improvements are scheduled to begin in July and the long awaited **Button Island/Spring Walk** footpath upgrades are scheduled to begin in the near future.