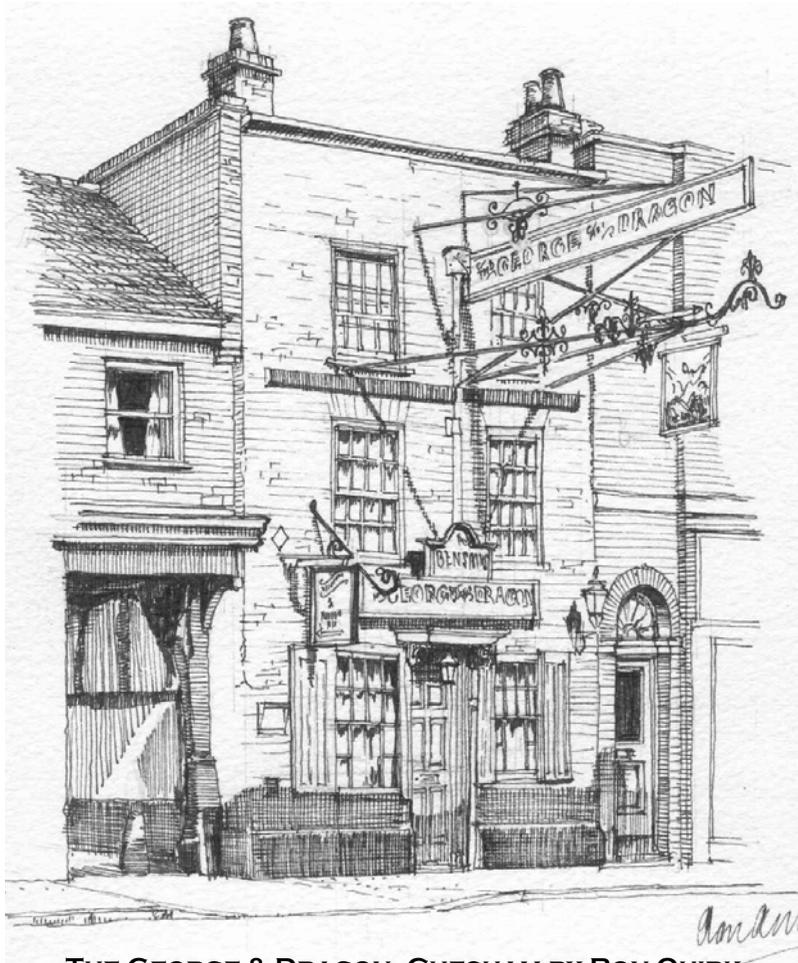


# ANTAS

ASSOCIATION OF NORTH THAMES AMENITY SOCIETIES

## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2003



**THE GEORGE & DRAGON, CHESHAM BY RON QUIRK**

Chesham will host the next meeting of ANTAS on Saturday April 12th in the Church Rooms, Church Street, Chesham following coffee at 9:30am. Business will be followed by an illustrated talk, "Is sustainable transport deliverable in Britain?" by Terry Figg of Transport 2000, the national, independent transport body concerned with sustainable transport, encouraging reduced car use, slower speeds and more use of public transport, walking and cycling.

# THE ASSOCIATION OF NORTH THAMES AMENITY SOCIETIES

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## Luton Airport—two runways?

*John Davies*

All living in this area must be aware by now of the expansionist plans for Luton Airport, spelt out last year in the consultation paper from the Department for Transport, listing the options for increasing airport capacity in the south east - a third runway at Heathrow, up to four runways at Stansted, a new airport on the Thames marshes near Rochester, and a new, longer runway at Luton.

The government's consultation plans came to grief in the High Court at the end of last year, when it was ruled that it was wrong to exclude Gatwick from the study, so it is now being re-run to include options for a second runway at Gatwick, but still with no reduction in the ambitions for Luton.

Luton plans would have a drastic effect on a wide swathe across Hertfordshire and into Buckinghamshire. Four times the present number of aircraft movements and three times the number of passengers is the aim. A new longer runway would replace the existing one, possibly on a new alignment inflicting maximum environmental damage on Hitchin and Harpenden (while having virtually no effect on Luton!). Unlike the existing runway, it would be long enough for Jumbo jets fully fuelled to cross the Atlantic. And of course with massive road building schemes to handle the huge increase in passenger numbers.



If that was not sufficient, Luton Airport has published its own scheme as a response to the consultation: wanting not one, but two new runways, even more ambitious road building schemes, and a new rail link across the Hertfordshire countryside to the East Coast Main Line at Stevenage. This extreme proposal has little credibility, and may well be aimed at getting people to accept with relief the government's expansion plans.

Thanks to the High Court ruling, the consultation process is open again and we have until the end of June to make our views known. During the earlier round there was perhaps insufficient co-ordination between groups objecting to the expansion of Luton. A new umbrella group, Limit Luton Alliance, has now been established, with the participation of local authorities and voluntary groups, including several civic societies.

However it remains important for all who feel strongly about the proposals to have their say before the end of June. Free copies of the detailed proposals can be obtained by phoning 0845 100 5554 or from the website [www.airconsult.gov.uk](http://www.airconsult.gov.uk) .

# A Civic Trust Pathfinder Society

*Ed Grimsdale, the Buckingham Society*

The Civic Trust started its new Pathfinder Programme last Autumn to help Civic Societies to become more ° Influential ° Active ° Inclusive ° Exciting. It is part of Martin Bacon's repositioning of the Civic Trust to make our movement's national impact more focussed and effective. In Pathfinders, representatives of up to 40 Civic Societies are given extensive training for a small one-off payment of £250.

The programme took place over three extended weekends in a Hotel in Coventry and was devoted to different themes ▪ Leadership ▪ Civic Design ▪ Project Development.

Whilst the Civic Trust envisaged that each Society would send one person to be transformed into a "Champion of Change", some Societies like ours, sent different delegates to the three modules in order to spread the benefit more widely.

The first impact was the sheer variety of Societies that make up our national movement and the breadth of their engagement in community change. Some, like Leeds Civic Trust, have paid professional officers, large investments, a lengthy publications list and a 'home', whilst others, that I'd better not name, have tiny Committees populated by old warriors who fought on the first Civic Trust front in the 1960's, and who are desperate to hand their blunderbusses to a younger generation. Without a doubt, networking amongst the delegates was the most powerful learning tool on offer. By the third weekend there were few Societies who had not brought their recruitment flyer into the 21st century. Fewer still who had not decided that fortune favours the brave.

"We have corporate membership, do you?" "No, but tell me about it."

"Well we've got 200 corporate members, we charge them £50 a year and this is what they get for it . . . ." (eyes pop out on stalks, as the mental arithmetic clocks up £10,000 income).

"Our money spinner is coach trips, we have a programme, for one day, weekend and foreign trips, we make thousands of pounds a year profit."

"We have about 250 members, and we run three museums, our last National Lottery Grant brought in £150,000 - that wasn't much but it was a help." (If they can do it with 250 members, why can't we?)

ANTAS members will know how much they glean from their occasional Saturday morning colloquies. Just imagine fifty ANTAS Meetings one after the other supported by regular food and drink and the best advice available in England and you will begin to feel the sea change that is on offer from the Pathfinder route.
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Naturally, the training, although consistently good in quality, sometimes was declared redundant. Some of those attending the 'Leadership' module had experienced similar courses during 'day-jobs' as head teachers, chief planners or lawyers. That is a reason for sending a succession of delegates who can learn skills that are new to them.

Although I too, have enjoyed extensive leadership training, as a society Chairman I was pleased to be reminded that having professional expectations of people involved in voluntary societies is good. Job descriptions for instance, may seem at first sight to be over-bureaucratic, but when a team has passed through 'storming' and other phases, knowing what to expect from each-other creates trust and efficiency. Societies with clear aims and high, shared expectations rarely fail.

Each society was asked to prepare a major project; one that would take them outside their comfort zone and engage them in breaking new ground. The Buckingham Society chose "2003, The Year of the River". Our aim is to identify how the people of Buckingham want the river Great Ouse (which encircles our market town yet is largely neglected and forlorn) to be improved. That will generate a design brief that will complement our "Vision and Design Statement" which deals with the built environment. The new experience for our Society will be our commitment to identify and raise funds and partners to turn plans into realities. Already we have collected £500+ in cash and have pledges of several thousand pounds from local charities and property developers. Soon, we shall be bombarding the National Lottery with a major bid for funding. Pathfinder Projects must show a clear outcome within a year.

The Pathfinder Class of 2003 will assemble in a few month's time for a communal celebration, and an opportunity for the Civic Trust and the Pathfinder Sponsors, such as CABE who poured in thousands of pounds to support each delegate, to measure the benefits. What have we gained?

- A greater vision of our national movement's battleground
- A change of emphasis from "We object" to "We propose"
- A better appreciation of the power of partnership
- The need to modernise to avoid the atrophy of preaching to the converted
- Renewed fervour, energy and commitment.



**the civic trust**

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**Are you ready for the challenge of change?**

**Could yours be a Pathfinders Civic Society?**

The Civic Trust is looking for 40 Civic Societies to become Pathfinders, examples of how Civic Societies should be in the 21st century.

- Influential
- Active
- Inclusive
- Ending

**About the Civic Trust**

**Head Offices:**  
Policy and Campaigns  
Civic Trust Awards  
Registration Unit  
Heritage Clean Days  
Environmental Action Fund  
Civic Champions  
Great Train Awards

The Civic Trust is committed to the Civic Society movement. Civic Societies are the spearhead of our activities to improve the quality of life in our cities, towns and villages. The best Civic Societies involve lots of people of different ages and backgrounds, undertake practical projects as well as campaigns for a better urban environment, improved participation and better functioning communities.

It won't be long before the Civic Trust advertises places on the next Pathfinders. Do not vacillate, cut the endless debate on your Executive Committee - just find the fee and go for it. Just one place on the course will make your town a far better place, and that's what we all want, isn't it?▪

*(Continued from page 7)*

bury Retail Against Crime Initiative and had started to use the natural auditorium of the Market Square for concerts and other events.

Early in 2001 Carol Ryall decided to move on and during the year Talia Sulman took on the job. She had worked in tourism in Richmond and Devon. One of Talia's first tasks was to facilitate a Visioning Exercise for Aylesbury Town Centre where the views of many groups and individuals could be collated to enable a town centre plan to be put together. This is something the Society had been doing using its members since our formation in 1974. Some of our ideas had come to fruition like pedestrianisation which we had first mooted in 1980, a town council in 1981, covered shopping centre for Friars Square in 1985 and diverting buses away from the Market Square. We had also been instrumental in keeping the cinema in the town centre, believing that the night economy of the town was important. Although in time many of the Society's ideas had been introduced, the town had to keep evolving if it was to keep up with its rivals notably Hemel Hempstead, High Wycombe and Oxford.

The visioning exercise had given a platform on which the TCP could expand ideas. It took almost nine months for a draft action plan to be published but it coincided with the TCP deciding to expand its membership.

The Society attended the initial meeting and decided that the benefits of membership would outweigh the high annual fee of £220. These benefits included -

- Involvement in delivering some of the actions identified in the Vision Plan (two themes, Transport and Environmental Enhancements close to our heart)
- Having an input in the future town centre developments
- Influence the steering committee
- Promotion of member's profiles in the newsletter
- Automatic consultation on town centre issues
- Opportunities to develop links with both councils.

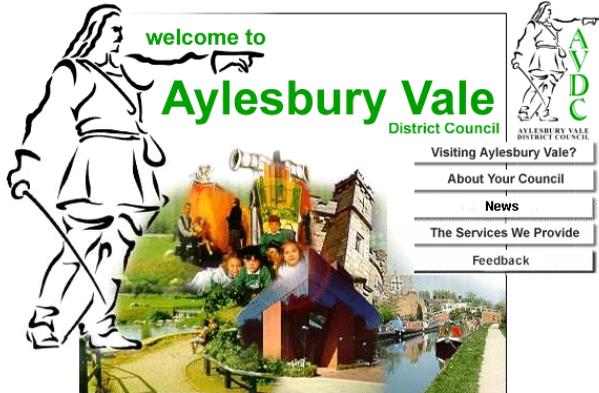
The issues of the town centre for the TCP and The Aylesbury Society are common ground and we feel that at last we may be able to expand our influence. Other members include the newly formed Aylesbury Town Council, AVDC, Bucks County Council, Friars Square Shopping Centre, Hale Leys Shopping Centre, Boots, Beatties, Marks & Spencers, Thames Valley Police and many small businesses in the town centre. We are looking forward to a successful partnership. For more information on the TCP visit their website page at [www.vale-web.co.uk/business/index.asp](http://www.vale-web.co.uk/business/index.asp) .

# The Aylesbury Society and the Town Centre Partnership

*Roger King*

Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership was formed in 1996 as a joint initiative between Aylesbury Vale District Council, Bucks County Council and the major businesses in the town centre. Their mission was to make Aylesbury Town Centre a vibrant place for people to work, visit and live. Town Centre Partnerships were not new, they existed in such diverse towns as Bournemouth to Darlington, Trowbridge to Middlesbrough and Mansfield to Romford. In some respects they were the new equivalent to Chambers of Commerce.

One of the first tasks of the Aylesbury TCP was to employ a Town Centre Manager. This had been successfully tried in other local towns notably High Wycombe and the first incumbent in the job was Carol Ryall. She soon established a reputation for being high profile and proactive in the town centre introducing many new events. These included charity fairs, farmers markets, Christmas lights switch on, hanging baskets and Aylesbury in Bloom, and Continental markets. All these events encouraged locals and visitors to come and spend money in the town.



The Aylesbury Society had been successfully organising Heritage Open Days since its inauguration in 1993 and our first joint effort with the Town Centre Manager was in 1998. At its height of popularity HOD in Aylesbury had aggregate attendances of nearly 2000. By 2001 this had fallen to just 350 and we have now dropped the event from our calendar.

In the meantime the TCP had established a Corporate Event and Marketing Group, was producing a newsletter and promotional literature for the town, had set up an Ayles-

*(Continued on page 6)*

newsletters, leaflets, other printed materials, websites and the use of e-mail.

The output from this initial work will be a report that defines a ‘Communications Map’ of the network required for effective communication, a review of our existing communications – and hence the ‘gap’ between ‘where we are now’ and ‘where we need to be’. The report will also include a project plan ready for presentation to funding organisations covering the work in stage two of the project. This is likely to include:

- ° Enhancement of the design and content of newsletters and other printed materials.
- ° Development of both the ANTAS and civic society websites.
- ° Specification and development of training packages for electronic communication.

I believe that the output from the first stage will provide very useful information, even before we progress to stage two. We will ensure that you are kept up to date with progress and hope that you will all get involved in some way.



*(Continued from page 16)*

At National level the Civic Trust have a small team at Carlton House terrace but resources are limited so effective lobbying and briefings can only be provided on a few issues. This means that civic societies’ registration fees to the Civic Trust must rise if we are to continue to have a voice, and rise substantially for an increasingly strong force for our views where it counts—at the political level.

The whole civic society movement faces challenges such as the first major review of the planning system since it was set up over 50 years ago. If we fail to engage in the planning process, others will step in and be heard.

CTSE is the association of civic societies registered with the Civit Trust, located in the South East Government Region ie. the old counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex. Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex. It has been in existence for over two years, promoting the civic society movement as a whole and representing them on regional consultative bodies such as RAISE (Regional Action & Involvement South East and SEFS (South East Forum for Sustainability).

## ANTAS/Civic Trust Communication Project

*Peter Diplock*

I hope that the stage is about to be reached with this project when we will be coming to all of our member societies to ask for help – more of that later. A key aim is to improve all aspects of communication within the civic society movement, using ANTAS as a ‘pilot exercise’. Following the initial broad definition of the scope of the project we have produced a more detailed plan that can be used both to apply for funding and to brief the people who will be doing the work. John Davies and I had a meeting at the Civic Trust in January at which the plan was discussed and agreed. We found that the project split into two stages. As a result of this meeting the Civic Trust are seeking possible sources of funding and identifying people who might be invited to bid for the work in the first stage of the project.

The purpose of this stage is to develop a clear picture of the communication requirements within the civic trust movement and to review some of the existing communication methods. This stage is thought to be crucial to the overall success of the project. Its findings should be of great value both to the Civic Trust and to



civic societies on a stand-alone basis. It represents the basic research into the information and communication needs at all levels of the chain linking individual members of civic societies, the civic societies themselves, sub-regional associations (such as ANTAS), regional associations and the Civic Trust.

It is proposed that the people contracted to do the work will hold discussions, either face to face or by telephone, to establish the communication needs at each of the interfaces. This is where we will be asking for your help. We want to involve all of the member societies within ANTAS in some way during the process. We will want to get information from both your committee and also ordinary members (and maybe potential members) of your societies.

During this part of the project a review will be made of the existing methods of communication used by ANTAS and all member societies. This will include

## Get a Website! Get a Life!

*Chris Woodman, contact@antas.org.uk*

Several ANTAS societies now have their own websites. A website can help you communicate not only with your members but with local councillors and officers, press and other people you want to influence. It can help your campaigns by making important documents available to people you may never even have heard of. It can certainly get you new members and it can attract correspondence from all over the world which you can use to add interest to your newsletter.

But before you get into the technical bit, there are important strategic decisions to take about the kind of site you want to create. The easiest option, which minimises commitment for the future, is to post some attractive general publicity material which will not go out of date, giving contact data for your hon. secretary and membership secretary. To that you will probably want to add your forward diary of events, but of course that will need to be updated at least monthly. However, you can go much further than this if you wish: more detailed information on your society, its officers and its constitution; a membership application form; composition of your specialised groups and contact data for group leaders; and most ambitiously of all, you can have a frequently updated news page with links to a series of pages on specific issues. You could even set up your own society messageboard.

What you choose will depend on how much effort you have available and who you intend will do the updating.

My firm view is that you do not need to hire a consultant to do this for you; or at least, if you do, you need somebody who is both a consultant and a personal trainer and will set it up initially in a way that allows your own members to do all the subsequent updating without assistance. Updating web pages is no more difficult than word-processing, and just as quick, although there is a slightly different set of rules and habits to be learnt.

My recommendation for ANTAS societies is to invest in a copy of Microsoft FrontPage 2000 to build and maintain your web. You can however, produce impressive and satisfactory results using Word 2000 (take a look at [www.chriswoodman.co.uk/WordWeb/](http://www.chriswoodman.co.uk/WordWeb/)), though you need a different mindset from

when you produce printed documents, and in the longer run FrontPage may give you more flexibility. It will not be difficult to switch from Word to FrontPage later if you want to be cautious.

Then you need to decide how to parcel out the work in your society. Will your webmaster compose all the material, or will you have a system for updates to be supplied by different officers?

Of course, you'll need a web address. Freeserve will give you, for nothing, an address like [www.freeserve.com/newtownsociety](http://www.freeserve.com/newtownsociety) and all the "web space" you need. But you may prefer to pay for a "proper" address like [www.newtownsociety.org.uk](http://www.newtownsociety.org.uk). You can buy this from Easyspace or you can now go through Freeserve. If you do that, you will need to pay a small annual "hosting" fee as well as the original registration fee. And finally, you will need a programme like Terrapin or CuteFTP which makes a doddle of uploading pages from the master web on your webmaster's own PC to the remote server.

Well, that's just a summary. I am now incorporating this into some advice pages on the ANTAS website [www.antas.org.uk](http://www.antas.org.uk) and will welcome comments.

**Don't forget we have a message board, see  
[www.antas.org.uk](http://www.antas.org.uk)**

## The Chairman Writes

*Peter Diplock*

I was very pleased to have been able to present Anthony Wethered, our second Vice-President and past Hon Secretary, with a glass bowl and candle holder, both engraved with the Buckinghamshire swan and Hertfordshire hart. A small 'thank you' for his many years working on behalf of ANTAS and our member societies. He was delighted with the generous gift from so many individuals and societies.

There were not many volunteers to take over from Anthony, and to say that I was glad that Andrew Sangster agreed to become Secretary is an understatement. When he agreed to put his name forward he said that he would be asking for more help from member societies, for instance when ANTAS responds to consultation documents. Many of you answered his request for input regarding the Review of the Planning Enforcement System in England, thank you. We will be asking for similar help in future. We may even ask someone else to act as the collator of responses and to prepare the ANTAS response. Please advise us when you think that ANTAS should be responding to something, we may have missed it!

Chris Woodman continues to provide an invaluable service in keeping our web site, [www.antas.org.uk](http://www.antas.org.uk) up to date. The website provides member societies and the general public with on-line access to current issues and events, links to the Civic Trust, government sites and many other sources of information. It is not just for the few people that attend ANTAS meetings. Please make all members of your societies aware of our web site and its potential value. One part of the web site that is not well used at present is the message board. I believe that one of the best things about ANTAS is how we share information both at our two meetings each year and by way of the Newsletter. The message board should enable this to happen between meetings as well. What can go on the message board?.... Many different things: Information that you have found that might be of use to others; requests for help; reports of successes that you have achieved. You can post items on the message board yourself or, if you do not have access to the Internet, send anything to me and I will post it for you (you will have to give a telephone number or address for replies to you).

The membership of ANTAS has been static for many years now. I would like every Civic Society in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire to feel that there is value in being a member. Our subscriptions are small, just to cover our running cost, and hopefully should not deter membership. Can you help? Is there a society near to you that you could bring along as a guest to our next meeting? Would you be willing to make contact with a society that is close to you? Please let me know if you are willing to help.

I look forward to seeing many of you on Saturday 12th April in Chesham.

## Tesco superstore development is proposed in St Albans

*Peter Trevellion*

Readers may be aware that the next version of PPG6 on retailing, is due out this spring. It cannot come too soon for St Albans, who face the prospect of a 7,000 square metre store some 600 metres from the city centre. If Tesco did get permission, not only would it mean that we would lose a valuable housing site, which already has permission, but it would certainly threaten the vitality and viability of the shopping centre itself. We can only hope that the forthcoming Government guidance is crystal clear on this point - in the town centre **means** in the town centre and nothing less.

Curiously, Tesco appear to be behaving exactly as property speculators are expected to behave - buying up housing but not declaring their ownership, letting the properties run down and fall empty thereby blighting this area of the City. They are also unwilling to talk to the Council about plans for redevelopment in the shopping centre itself.

Does anyone know of an equivalent example elsewhere in the region? Either where one has been permitted close to, but not in, a shopping centre; or where such a scheme has successfully been fought off. I would be very interested to hear.



## Chesham—a description

*With thanks to the late Dr Arnold Baines,  
Merrin Molesworth, Focus Newsletter Editor, the Chesham Society*

Chesham has been settled since pre-Roman times. Off East Street Stratford's Yard is a middle stone age site where flint implements of earlier and later times have been found. Celtic peasants lived near the present town centre although probably too scattered to be considered a village by the Saxons who came in the seventh century. The Saxon compact settlement was called Caestleshamm, meaning the Watermeadow (hamm) by the heap of stones (ceastel) because of the characteristic puddingstones consisting of pebbles in a sandstone matrix.

Chesham is first mentioned by name in 970 in the will of the Lady Elgiva, divorced wife of King Edwy, who liberated her penal slaves working on the upland Chiltern hamlets. It was probably Elgiva who diverted the Chess to provide head water for Lord's Mill, thus creating Chesham Moor.

Settlement spread out along the ridges to form what became the eight hamlets of Great Chesham with their own woodlands and their own common fields, cultivated in acre strips, and the steep hillside above the town was terraced into lynchets. The first description of Chesham is in the doomsday book of 1086.



View across St Mary's Way and  
Skottowes Pond to Lowndes Park

Chesham's strategic position near the headwaters of the Chess led to its growth from a village into a market, craft and service centre. The Mad Hatter character by Lewis Carol is thought to be based on a local who lived near present day Boots chemists (hatters were affected by arsenic used on the felt). Cattle and sheep were reared on the Chiltern slopes, water-cress beds laid out by the river and the extensive beech woods provided timber for wood turning and furniture components. Chesham became known for making brushes, brooms, boots and beer—at one time there were three breweries here. Paper was made at Weirhouse Mill, straw-plaiting and lace-making were cottage industries, Townfield Yard had a ropewalk and bricks were produced nearby at Bellingdon.

Chesham became a centre for dissent, Lollardy spread from Oxford before the Reformation and our own martyr Thomas Harding was burnt at White Hill in 1532. In the seventeenth century Baptists flourished. In 1889 Chesham acquired the railway allowing commuting to London and new residents expanded the town.

Today Chesham maintains its reputation as a productive, industrious centre for commerce and light industry including printworks of all types, balloon suppliers, a bottled water plant, adhesive products, metalworks, plastics, communications equipment, precision engineers, and there is one remaining boot factory and one brushmaker left. But alas, no breweries!



The oldest house in Chesham No 54 Church St, timber-framed, with wattle and daub filling but altered since. It is an example of a 14th century domestic building, note the remains of the tracery of the upper window

# Civic Trust Fees Need to Rise

*Merrin Molesworth, Civic Trust South East*

Local civic societies are part of a nation-wide network and the Civic Trust is the only organisation that represents us at a National level. Local Authorities are required to consult with local groups and if civic societies or the Civic Trust fail to respond then others will fill the gap eg. Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, CPRE or even the House Builders Federation. Lobbying by vested interests is already taking place. At Regional level the machinery of government and its quangos is growing, particularly in proposals for transport, planning policy & local plans, economic development and obtaining EU funding. When did your civic society last lobby your Government for the Regions?

*(Continued on page 8)*

# Scam—our green fields are targeted again

*The Editor*

Hyde Heath had it, the London Green Belt Council have reported one based on an example from the Tewin Society, Welwyn, Hertfordshire; the Chiltern Society are collating instances, one in Dacorum, Hertfordshire; while a most visible example is in the beautiful Hughenden Valley at the bottom of Cryers Hill on the A4128. CRASH – Concerned with Rural Aspects of South Heath, researched a disreputable company buying farmland then selling plots and putting hard-standing at an existing gateway.

All are scams where unsuspecting immigrants or anyone ignorant of planning policy is duped into buying so-called house plots but on green field sites, even Green Belt or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Glossy brochures lead purchases to think they will be able to build on the land and indeed, if there are enough of them pressuring the Planning Department, who knows what might be permitted. If these dozens of owners club together to form a housing association they will be in a strong position. If you hear of such a scam the first thing to do is notify council and get an Article 4 Directive placed to stop anyone building fences. Also spread the word so we can all be alert. Our message board would be a good place to pool information, [www.antas.org.uk](http://www.antas.org.uk)

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