

FRIENDS OF VERULAMIUM PARK



NEWSLETTER 20
JANUARY 2008

*Our aim is to preserve the natural
beauty of this precious space*

www.fvp.org.uk

FVP Newsletter 20

January 2008

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FVP Newsletter 20



From the chair ...

During the last few months our attention has been focused on the proposals for the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). In July 2007 SACDC appointed The Landscape Partnership (TLP) as their consultants. Their conservation management plan proposals will be presented to the cabinet for approval on January 8th, 2008, and form the basis of the bid to the HLF in March 2008.

Their proposals are available on the FVP web site, and summarised in the next article. The first task for TLP was to consult park users and gather information about their views. A digest of these responses then enabled them to put draft proposals up for public consultation. Users were asked to complete questionnaires and 1,147 were returned. Letters were sent out to 118 local interest groups (eg theatre, sports, schools, cyclists, the Inn on the Park) and 39 telephone interviews were undertaken with key individuals. In addition, special efforts were made to contact 'hard to reach' groups and non-users. A conference was held to consult younger people. It was, I think, a thorough consultation process.

The draft proposals were put out for public consultation on TLP's website and an exhibition mounted in the Verulamium Museum from November 3rd to 10th. There were over 4,500 web hits during the consultation period and 172 visitors to the museum exhibition on the first day. Visitors to the web site and the museum were asked to respond with both positive and negative comments, which they did! The Friends also distributed a consultation document to members, either by email or post, and the results were very similar. Highest on the lists for improvements were the lakes and river, the need for park maintenance with a dedicated park ranger, and ecology and wild life. There was concern about the state of the loos, the wish to see the archaeological interest enhanced and better play facilities for a wider age of children. The concept of a circular walk was favoured. Other improvements requested were better explanation and interpretation of the site, cycle routes and improved lighting.

The analysis showed that 55% of respondents went to the park once or twice a week, 42% staying for 30 minutes to an hour, and 33% for 1-2 hours. Most highly valued by visitors were the lakes and river, natural open space, and the wildlife.

Eighty six percent said they felt safe or very safe with some qualifying this to 'safe in daylight'.

Consultation with young people showed that they valued the park as much as other groups and that the heritage was of equal importance too. However, they wanted more seasonal events, adventure play and more 'things to do' in the park. The overall feedback was generally supportive of the proposals. However, there were clear disagreements between respondents over cycling through the park, planting in and around the lake edges, and lighting.

Meetings between TLP and English Heritage, and their response to the draft proposals, have been generally supportive. They have especially welcomed the comprehensive approach to park planning. Their key concerns are, however, that major work to the children's playground would be limited by the need to protect the sensitive archaeological site beneath it.

TLP's analysis showed that there was support for the key elements of their proposals: Halcrow's plan 6A for the lake and river, the enhancement of the ecology, development of the circular route, improvements to the park entrances, opening of the London and Silchester gates, and the long term plan for the Museum and Wildlife Centre. However, it was clear that further work needed to be done by TLP and the steering group to resolve issues concerning play areas, facilities for teenagers, cycling and the tree strategy. In the later half of November and in December concentrated efforts went into doing this, while holding on to the original design concept.

Madeleine Sansom

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### **The Ver with cows (circa 1910)**



photo: St Albans Museums

## **NEWS**

### **The Landscape Partnership's proposals**

These were considered by the council's Cabinet at their meeting on January 8<sup>th</sup>. Copies of the agenda documents and maps is available to be read or downloaded from the FVP website ([www.fvp.org.uk](http://www.fvp.org.uk)). If you would like a paper copy, please phone Madeleine Sansom on 01727 846 761.

The proposals are not yet fully developed and the documents are not very detailed. Broadly, it has been decided that an initial bid for £2m will be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund in March 2008. The majority of this funding will be spent on the lakes and river. The remaining items have been divided into 'A' and 'B' lists. The A items are those with highest priority, although TLP say that when final costings are available some A items may have to be moved to the B list. The B list items will require additional funding.

The major items in the A list are the refurbishment of the lakes and river, and tree planting to replace those lost. Hedgerows will also be replaced. Other items are: improving park entrances; the creation of a new entrance at Silchester Gate; the creation of new walks, with seating, viewpoints, signage and interpretation; sports facilities including a jogging route, and new tennis and netball courts by Westminster Lodge to replace those to be removed from the middle of the park; new play facilities by the splash park, and a creative play area in the centre of the park; an area for older young people with seating and a climbing wall; conservation of the Roman wall; staffing including a park ranger and an education officer. Do look at the council's agenda papers for more details.

**Janet Ouston**

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Railings along the causeway and the bridge at the King Harry Lane entrance

The need for maintenance to the bridge over the ditch and the railings to the Roman wall has been evident to all. We are grateful to John Lidington for drawing up a detailed list of works needed.

In June 2007 Robin Bain was appointed as English Heritage landscape manager for the scheduled monument site. We negotiated with him about these issues. In November we met Jeff Dyer, projects manager for English Heritage. The outcome was that he has agreed to allocate a budget of £7,500 for repairs and painting to the bridge with the remainder to be spend on starting work on the railings. This is, of course, the start of the process. We shall look to English Heritage for funding to complete it.

Madeleine Sansom

The new maintenance contract: one year on

January 1st, 2007 saw the project that had commenced in December 2005 come to a successful conclusion. During the previous two years we had surveyed and produced detailed maps, written the contract specification, conditions of contract and, most importantly, procured the contract.

Twelve months on and things are fairly calm. We have just pulled through what we can only describe as a difficult summer. The very wet and warm conditions resulted in excessive grass growth and difficult working conditions. Despite this we are now back on track.

In January discussions with John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance Ltd and the Friends of Verulamium Park resulted in an agreement that we would meet every two weeks to carry out joint monitoring inspections of areas within the park. There was, and still is, much to do but we have achieved a lot. One of the most important results is the development of our partnership with John O'Conner, in particular the park ranger (Michael Jacks) who has played a central role this year and has become part of the Verulamium Park monitoring team.

Richard Shwe, head of Culture and Community Development, recently made a number of changes to the structure of our department. One of these impacted on Nick Sherriff and me. We are now 'parks and green spaces officers' and our role is to focus on the management of the grounds maintenance contract. This means that we are now able to spend a lot more of our time monitoring, working in partnership with John O'Conner to achieve the desired goals.

With the Friends of Verulamium Park, we are now an effective team that is focused on the continued improvement of the park.

Daniel Flitton (green spaces officer, SACDC)

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## **Park monitoring: the Friends' contribution**

When I wrote about this in the September Newsletter I was optimistic that the involvement of FVP would have some effect on improving the enforcement of the maintenance contract. In the past few months this has happened to some extent.

The good news is that members of the FVP committee have been attending park inspection meetings where SACDC officers walk round the park with representatives of the contractor John O'Conner. These have taken place roughly once a fortnight. Lists are made each time of the work that is required, and progress is monitored at subsequent meetings. A lot of plans and promises are made but, unfortunately, the speed of delivery of actions is frustratingly slow.

Achievements include the sweeping and edge straightening of most of the paths – in some cases for the first time in several years. Michael, the park ranger, does a very good job with routine cleaning and litter clearance but is still not adequately supported on special occasions or with extra tasks. The two things the JO'C team seem reluctant to do are dredge litter from the lake, which is supposed to be done daily, and to scrub and maintain the seats, which has been promised but not done since last January. Concern has also been expressed about their failure to respond to seasonal demand.



We will continue to keep a critical eye on maintenance, encouraging SACDC to enforce the contract in full.

**Anthony Oliver**

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Verulam ward police meeting Thursday November 1st, 2007

Representatives of the Friends attended this meeting with other local residents' groups and local councillors.

Both the police and the FVP have asked that some of the fallen tree trunks be removed as they are a focus for antisocial behaviour.

The police, and Jim Bennie, the parks manager, will shortly be visiting the park,

particularly the Abbey Orchard, to agree instructions to John O'Conner to remove the growth at the bases of particular trees which are used to store drink.

The land at the bottom of the Abbey Orchard continues to be a focus for antisocial behaviour - drinking and drug taking. It has been accessed from the Abbey Orchard or over the river via 'dams' made from tree trunks. The Environment Agency have removed these. The absentee owner of the land has declined to fence the area off. It will cost approximately £6,000 to provide an effective and substantial fence. A neighbour has offered to pay for a significant proportion of this cost. Matched funding from the council's Joint Agency Group has been sought and refused. So the problem continues. Cllr Frearson agreed to research the possibility of the council using powers to compel the owner to fence this land. PCSO Jill Brown will design a questionnaire and distribute copies to those living in Pondwicks Close and Abbey Mill End to assess the number of other residents disturbed by this antisocial behaviour.

It was recognised that the park ranger has a lot of responsibilities (litter and loo cleaning among others) in a demanding role. The meeting was impressed by the work of Michael Jacks, a full time ranger. Michael has received training in the use of the SABAC radio, which enables rapid contact with the police. He has used it to deal with antisocial behaviour. A role description for the park ranger has not been written; perhaps this might be considered when Jim Bennie and JO'C review the first year of the contract and plans for the future.

A vagrant has been reported by the ranger and other residents as living in the area of Spencer's Dell. An injunction will be sought by the police banning him from the park.

Mountain bikes for use by PC Snook and PCSO Jill Brown have been ordered. After delivery they will be lighted and liveried, and used to respond to emergencies.

Madeleine Sansom

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## **Verulamium Forum November 15<sup>th</sup> 2007**

The meeting was chaired by Jim Bennie, parks and green spaces manager. The Department has recently been renamed 'Culture and Community Services'. In future they will be responsible for administering the Forum.

Three items which will be taken forward in 2008, provided that they are included in TLP's conservation management plan. They are: planting of large water plants by the edge of the big lake; construction of a path from the playground to the Inn on the Park; drawing up of detailed plans by Groundwork for the labyrinth garden.

- **The Abbey Orchard** The Abbey has appointed Justin Cross as its administrator. It was reported that Mr Cross was not in favour of tarmac for the path at the foot of the Abbey Orchard, and lacked funds for any work. Unfortunately, there was no representative from the abbey present.
- **Anti-social behaviour in the park** Inspector Hanson reported that the CCTV camera had made a huge difference to behaviour in the park. He advised that lighting on the causeway should be included in the management plan. He assured the meeting that the mobile police van and officers will be in the park on school break-up days and GCSE and A level results days in 2008. The Vintry Garden will also be closed.
- **Grounds maintenance contract** The new manager, Ken Oakey, will prepare a plan for 2008 which will form the basis of a council review, identifying achievements and areas for improvement. The Friends are invited to forward their comments to the council's parks manager by the end of January 2008. (There will be an FVP meeting on 'Monitoring the Contract' on Thursday January 17<sup>th</sup>).
- **Lake islands herons and geese** Barry Trevis, warden of Lemsford Springs reported on a record rise of nests from 12 in 2006 to 19 in 2007 with a total of 23 chicks ringed from the 11 nests which could be safely reached. Barry estimated 38 chicks for 2007. He suggested that the elderberry, which covers one fifth of the island, be cleared and replaced with larch which provides an excellent branch structure to support the nests. (See the next article.)
- **Notice boards signage and benches** All five notice boards have now been put in place with a sloping shelf for a map giving a 'you are here' position and other relevant information. The finger post signs, and some of the benches are to be cleaned and repainted this winter.
- **Recycling Bins** A recycling bin for glass,tins and plastic will be placed between the Inn of the Park and the splash park, with a second by the Fighting Cocks entrance.

**Other issues** Concern was expressed by the Civic Society at the creeping spread of tarmac in front of the gate at the entrance to Westminster Lodge field, and at the number of events in the park. They also raised the disturbance caused by the excessive use of loudspeakers. Many different contractors' work in the park, and some drive on the grass damaging it. A protocol for contractors is needed. Complaints were also voiced about the unkempt 'garden' by the hypocaust building. The Museum Trust has resources to improve the area. It was also hoped that the misspelling of 'mosaic' on the glass doors would be corrected.



**Jette Evans**

## Visiting the lake islands' heronry December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007

I was delighted that Barry Trevis, honorary warden of Lemsford Springs, suggested a site meeting to discuss the work needed to improve the nesting habitat for herons. Here was the chance to wade across the lake to see just what the lake island heronry was like. Jette Evans, Daniel Flitton (SACDC green spaces officer) and Dave Baxter (supervisor for John O'Conner) also took part. Barry supplied the chest high waders, sturdy poles to provide a 'third leg' and advice about keeping safe. He led the procession across the lake, breaking the ice as we went.

The work, which started last year, is part of an ongoing plan to restore the island habitat. It was agreed that Dave Baxter will reduce the height of an existing hawthorn to provide a lower and safer nesting site. This will be done before the start of nesting in January 2008. In September 2008 Dave will clear two areas of elderberry on the river side of the island.



Barry advised that the newly cut branches and other fallen branches should be put around the edges of the island to deter geese from landing and laying their eggs. Barry also proposed that the area be replanted with twenty new hawthorns and ten larches. He offered to supervise Friends who volunteered to do the work in September and October, 2008. If you'd like to take part, get your waders ready. The exact date will be in the May Newsletter.

**Madeleine Sansom**

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Myxomatosis

You will have noticed that the rabbit population in the park has declined very markedly in last few months. There has been another outbreak of myxomatosis, which is spread by biting insects. These have flourished during the wet summer.

Myxomatosis was first identified in South America in 1896. It was deliberately introduced into Australia in 1950 to control their rabbit population, and into France in 1952. The first outbreak in the UK was in 1953. Since then there have been periodic outbreaks and there is some evidence that natural immunity is building up. Pet rabbits should be vaccinated.

Janet Ouston

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## **Welcome to Ken Oakey**



Ken has recently been appointed as John O'Conner's new contracts manager, replacing Leigh Casling. He is responsible for the maintenance of Verulamium Park. His office is at the rear of Westminster Lodge.

**Janet Ouston**

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HISTORY OF THE PARK

What might have been ...

What did a Victorian Lord Verulam and today's Friends of Verulamium Park have in common? The answer is they both had deep misgivings about the incursion of mechanically driven transport through what was to be our glorious park. Lord Verulam did not want a railway crossing his land and the Friends are unhappy at the prospect of cyclists disturbing the calm of that same land.

The London and Birmingham Railway had opened to Boxmoor in 1837 and just as the M1 motorway in the 1960s had left St Albans without access to the 'latest' form of transport, it was not too long before the local tradesmen of St Albans had put sufficient pressure on the renamed London and North Western Railway to build a branch from its Watford station to the City.

Having surveyed the route, the directors of the LNWR decided to take a north easterly route from Watford across the easy flat land which lies between the two places. Parliamentary consent was achieved on February 11th, 1853. The LNWR had a longer term aspiration for the line. They hoped it would also serve Luton and Dunstable, so intended it to be a double tracked route with main line status.

The approach to St Albans would be alongside the river Ver, with a terminus at St Michael's close to the centre of the Roman city. To understand why this original intended plan made sense to the railway company's surveyors one has to remember that St Albans was without any other railway link, so passengers arriving at St Michael's would have had a gentler climb to the centre of city from here than from the bottom of Holywell Hill.



The Abbey station before 1939

However Lord Verulam was having none of it and was, in fact, supported by some local tradesmen who feared their businesses which had grown up alongside the old coach route up the hill would be severely damaged by the St Michael's terminus. After much delay the LNWR agreed to the location we now call the Abbey station but in turn reduced the status of the line to a single branch line and that is how it is today. The new branch opened to much local celebration on May 5th, 1858. The company had saved themselves the cost of the one and a half mile journey to St Michael's and provided its most immediate competitor, the Midland Railway, with an incentive to run its main line to St Pancras via the eastern side of St Albans picking up the Luton business at the same time.

The land on which a trunk line railway would have been laid remained verdant farmland and subsequently became Verulamium Park. Who knows how the area surrounding St Michael's would have looked today had the railway cut across it, with its busy station and resulting commercial development. Surely many of the

medieval buildings would have been lost and Sir Mortimer Wheeler's archeologists would have settled for some other location for their pre-war digging and scraping. The land was subsequently sold to the city by the Verulams with conditions that it should only be used as a park. We have to acknowledge the 1850s Verulam family's efforts for the verdant and antique charm of the park and St Michael's village.

Despite the line being listed in the notorious 'Beeching Act' for closure, housing developments in Watford allowed the branch line to survive, and it is enjoying renewed success as the road links between Watford and St Albans prove more and more inadequate for the daily flood of motor vehicles. Perhaps one day the line will be doubled and run direct services to London. One thing seems certain, we shall still have a Verulamium Park without railway tracks, signal boxes and station.

Tony Mason

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## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Planting yellow rattle in Seabrook's Field**

A few years ago, when the bid for Heritage Lottery funding was seriously becalmed, the FVP committee proposed to the members that we undertake a small scale practical project which the Friends would implement and which would not conflict with the HLF project. At a public meeting it was agreed to convert the grassy field, known then as the Summer Meadow, into a real flowering meadow. Since then the SACDC parks department (now known as Culture and Community Development) has mended and replaced the fencing around the meadow and supported us in getting the agreement of English Heritage to restore the old hedge which borders it. The first section of the hedge was restored in November and more will be done next year. This leaves the flowering bit of the project to do.



At present the grass growing in Seabrook's Field is pretty robust due to the fertility of the soil. The dense grass prevents wild flowers getting a foothold, and even if they did they thrive best in poor soils. Jon Green, the green spaces officer, introduced a new grass cutting regime, cutting to 100mm in both April and October with the cut grass collected up shortly thereafter, which is designed to reduce the soil's fertility.

But the process of reducing fertility takes a long time. To speed it up, Jon Green suggested that we plant yellow rattle (*rhinanthus minor*) which we did in September. Yellow rattle is an attractive partially parasitic grassland annual, which when established can reduce the vigour of grasses by up to 50%. We are advised that the establishment of yellow rattle is rather unpredictable and results vary. We are hopeful that, between April and mid July 2008, the yellow rattle will set seed so that when the grass is mowed in late July the seed will be propagated. In preparation for the broadcasting John O'Conner mowed the grass a month earlier, and shorter than usual (25mm). But the volunteers were daunted by the prospect of hand-raking the meadow to scarify the soil. We were extremely grateful to Jon Green and Leigh Casling (contracts manager for JO'C) for arranging to do it mechanically.

Thank you to Jon Green, the FVP volunteers who helped, Leigh Casling and Michael Jacks, the park ranger.

**Madeleine Sansom**

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Clearing the labyrinth garden area



On October 5th about 15 Friends, and nine members of the St Albans school conservation group, spent a very enjoyable afternoon clearing the area which we hope will become the labyrinth garden. This is the area on the left between the Verulamium Museum and the Inn on the Park. Apparently it was the location of a small zoo thirty years ago.

Amongst the rubbish, and the nettles, we found the remains of small sheds, car tyres and a large pile of coal! After filling a skip to the brim, we enjoyed the autumn sunshine with tea and cakes at the Inn on the Park.

Janet Ouston

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## Down in the ditch again

Since 2004 the Friends have had regular monthly Friday afternoon winter activity sessions. In the ditch the aim has been to cut down and remove the thick growth of both laurel and elderberry which deny space and nutrients to the native hazel and beech. Our work has been greatly aided by having brain and muscle power provided by the St Albans school conservation group. Sue Frearson, who led the group from 2004, retired in July 2007, and Andrew Bateman is now in charge. By January 2007 we had worked our way all along the Roman ditch so that it is now possible to see the Abbey from the King Harry Lane end. It has taken 20 sessions in all to achieve this.

The Friends have agreed with English Heritage, who have responsibility for this guardianship site, that they will pay for their contractors to work for two days each year in the ditch to continue to cut back and keep down regrowths. FVP, and the conservation group, will assist.



You are most cordially invited to come along. All you need is some stout shoes, and loppers or secateurs. Or just a willingness to help pull the branches to the bonfire site. Bonfires are accompanied by sausages both vegetarian and meat. The students are good cooks.

Please do try to join us. If you'd like to discuss this, phone 01727 846 761. The next two sessions will be on Friday January 18<sup>th</sup> and Friday February 1<sup>st</sup> 2008. Meet at the London Gate at 2pm.

**Madeleine Sansom**

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Seabrook's Field hedge planting

On November 30th, 29 volunteers planted the first 60 metres of the renewed hedge alongside Seabrook's Field. The volunteers comprised members of FVP, St Albans School conservation group students, led by Andrew Bateman, staff of John O'Conner's and Jim Bennie the parks manager. Rachel Keen of Countryside Management Services, who had advised SACDC on the methodology for planning on this archaeologically sensitive site, schooled us in how to plant 'whips' (bare rooted hedge plants of field maple, hawthorn and dog rose) correctly and at

appropriate intervals. Throughout the afternoon Rachel kept a critical eye on the operation ensuring that the hedge remained straight, and that supporting poles and rabbit guards were put correctly on each plant. By 3.15pm the job was done, and at 3.20pm it started to rain. An excellent afternoon's work. Thank you all.



Replanting this ancient hedge, which had been undermined by rabbit warrens and invaded by elderberry and studded by dead elm, is part of a wider project adopted by FVP in September 2004. At that time the Verulamium Heritage Park Project was in the doldrums and we wanted a scheme which could be implemented independently of it. The first stage of the scheme was quickly effected with Jim Bennie financing the repairs of the fence along Blue House Hill and King Harry Lane.

We realised that the creation of a wild flower meadow on Seabrook's Field was going to be a long term affair. We did however expect to get the hedge restored pretty speedily. Jim Bennie the parks manager was most supportive and enthusiastic. We would also like to thank Dr Ros Niblett, then district archaeologist, for persuading English Heritage's inspector to attend a meeting with us in February 2006 to agree a hedge plan in principle. Thank you also to Rachel Keen for finding a way of satisfying English Heritage's requirements for doing this in practice. The last hurdle to the actual planting was obtained just a little too late for planting in April 2007. But had we planted in April – one of the hottest and driest on record – we may well have lost the plants. As it was, as soon as the decision was taken to defer planting until this November it rained and rained.

Jim Bennie will now seek English Heritage's permission to restore another section of the hedge. I look forward to another hedge planting session on November 28th 2008 – get your spades and thick gloves ready.

Madeleine Sansom

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## **Can you help to care for trees in Verulamium Park?**

St Albans has launched a volunteer tree warden scheme – and Verulamium Park really does need tree wardens. The launch was introduced by the Deputy Mayor of St Albans, councillor Geoff Harrison and organised by David Curry, St Albans tree warden co-ordinator. We hope to invite David, and some volunteer tree wardens, to a future meeting.

The principal guest was John Stokes, director of rural programmes at the Tree Council. He explained that he had worked for the Tree Council since 1987, the year of the great storm when 15 million trees were blown over.

One of the side effects of this major disaster was massive publicity for trees and their major importance to the environment. East Sussex already had a team of tree wardens at the time of the storm and reinstatement of trees as well as recovery in general was achieved far more rapidly in East Sussex than in neighbouring Kent and West Sussex where no tree warden teams existed in 1987.



There are now 8,000 tree wardens across 139 local authorities covering half the land area of the U.K. The Tree Council itself coordinates tree warden activity nationally and its general aim is 'More trees. Better care for trees. Effective action regarding trees'.

Training is provided for tree wardens whose role is to: take stock of the trees in each area; act as a local liaison point; become the eyes and ears of the local community regarding trees; and perform practical tasks for the introduction, preservation and protection of trees. If you are interested in volunteering, or want to find out more, please contact David Curry (01727 819 372 or email [treewardens@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:treewardens@stalbans.gov.uk)). The first training session will be on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

**Barrie Mort**

## TALKS

### **Ver valley walks October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Ian Gibbon**, Countryside Management Services

Ian gave a very interesting talk about his work on developing access to the Ver valley. The stimulus to developing these new walks came from the need to revise and update the Ver Valley Walks leaflet in collaboration with the Ver Valley Society.

The underlying principle of the project was the protection and enhancement of the river Ver and its valley. This involved: conservation of the biodiversity and habitats of the river valley; conservation of the water resource of the Ver

catchment; enhancement of the river valley landscape; improved awareness of current and future stresses/threats; and greater appreciation of the relationship between the use of water and the health of the river.



photo of Redbournbury Ford by Andy Webb

The project aimed to increase public access to, and enjoyment of, the river valley, encourage a greater appreciation of its value and the threats facing it. Ian set out the special features of chalk streams, and ended by describing the walks. The Ver, from Kensworth Lynch to its confluence with the river Colne at Brickett Wood, is divided into eight sections, each having its own circular walk.

More details about the river Ver are on the Ver Valley Society website:

<http://www.riverver.co.uk> and the CMS website:

<http://enquire.hertscc.gov.uk/cms/explore/walk/vervalleyviews.htm>

**Janet Ouston**

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Protocols covering public events in the park Tuesday November 20th, 2007

Stuart Foster (Leisure Services Officer, Culture and Community Development, SACDC)

Stuart gave an informative talk about the council's protocols for events in the park. He described the different sets of regulations for large and small events, and the distinction made between licensable and non-licensable activities. Licensable activities are those where alcohol is sold, food and drink is sold after 11pm or there is 'regulated entertainment' which includes amplified and unamplified music, live bands, discos, night-clubs, karaoke, cinema, theatre, dance performances, and indoor sporting events. The annual fireworks display and the Albantide Pilgrimage are not licensable.

He explained that eight licensable events were permitted each year in Verulamium Park, with a maximum capacity of 4,999 people. Events are managed by Leisure Connections, but applications are co-ordinated by the council's Safety Advisory Group (SAG). This group acts as the first point of contact for those wishing to hold events. If the organisers of the event wishes to sell alcohol, they have to apply for a temporary event notice (TEN). This is a separate process from applying to hold the event.

The discussion focused on two issues: noise from events, and the need to inform regular park users when events would be held. There are plans to reduce the overall sound levels of events in 2008 by localising amplification. The SAG will also be publishing a calendar of events. Full details are available on the council's website: <http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/leisure/events/events-safety.htm>

Janet Ouston

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## **Christmas sherry and mince pies December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

Once again, this was a very pleasant start to the Christmas festivities with about 40 people enjoying sherry and mince pies at the Inn on the Park. Thank you to Tony Mason for organizing the event and Wendy Hooper, manager of the Inn on the Park, for hosting it and providing the mince pies.

**Janet Ouston**



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LETTER

October 1st, 2007

Dear Editor

In recent issues of the FVP Newsletter, the part of the park between the St Michael's entrance and the small lake has been referred to as Belle Meadow. I understand that there is an ancient map showing this spelling of Belle Meadow but I suggest that this is an error and the correct spelling is Bell Meadow.

In medieval times, transporting heavy loads over long distances was very difficult so new bells for a church were often not cast at a foundry remote from the church, but were cast in a pit dug in a field close to the church. It is clear from St Michael's church records that in the 16th century the church had four bells and it is possible that they might have been cast in what has become known as Bell Meadow.

Yours sincerely, *Geoff Kirk*

Contacting members by email

Just under half the membership should have received email updates from me about Friends' activities and events in the park. We send them out at the beginning of each month. But some people have found that their email programs have placed these in the 'spam' or 'bulk' mailbox rather than the inbox. If you haven't received any updates and think you should have done, have a look in your spam box and remove my address from your list of 'blocked' senders. If you would like your address added to the distribution list for updates, please email it to me - janet.ouston@btinternet.com.

Janet Ouston

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### **FVP Committee May 2007 to May 2008**

|                                                       |                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Chair                                                 | Madeleine Sansom |
| Vice chair                                            | Tony Mason       |
| Treasurer                                             | Richard Blossom  |
| Secretary                                             | Jette Evans      |
| Park monitoring<br>co-ordinator                       | Anthony Oliver   |
| Newsletter and website<br>editor<br>Committee minutes | Janet Ouston     |
| Committee member                                      | Flo Stone        |

## January to July 2008

**Thursday January 17<sup>th</sup>** St Michael's Parish Centre, 8pm. *One year on. How are John O'Conner's doing? The findings of the FVP monitors.*

**Friday January 18<sup>th</sup>** *Ditch maintenance.* Meet at London Gate, 1.45pm, with loppers, gloves and boots. We will be removing elderberry and cutting back growth on tree trunks.

**Friday February 1<sup>st</sup>** *Ditch maintenance.* Meet at London Gate, 1.45pm, with loppers, gloves and boots. We will continue work undertaken on January 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Thursday February 21<sup>st</sup>** St Michael's Parish Centre, 8pm. *The development of the physic garden, in the old Roman town of Cowbridge, South Glamorgan.* The garden was created from a barren and disused part of the town by a group of local people. Lyn Richards will tell us how this was achieved. He will also illustrate his talk with a slide show, showing the wonderful results. The Friends hope Lyn's enthusiasm will spur us on to a similar project in our park.

**Sunday March 16<sup>th</sup>** *Litter pick.* Meet at the Abbey Mills entrance, 11am to 1pm. Please bring a plastic bag and wear gloves.

**Thursday April 17<sup>th</sup>** St Michael's Parish Centre, 8pm. *What is in Verulamium Park?* Dr Ros Niblett, district archeologist 1987-2006 Author of 'The Roman City of St Albans' (Tempus, 2001) and 'Albans Buried Towns' (Oxbow Books, 2005).

**Friday May 2<sup>nd</sup>** *Clearing the labyrinth garden.* Meet at the Verulamium Museum steps, 1.45pm. Please bring and rake, fork or lopper and wear gloves.

**Thursday May 22<sup>nd</sup>** St Michael's Parish Centre, 8pm. *AGM and a report on the progress of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid.*

**Saturday June 28<sup>th</sup>** *Roman wall cleaning with Legion XIII.* Meet at the London Gate, 10am to 12.30pm. Please wear gloves and bring a small soft brush.

**Thursday July 10<sup>th</sup>** *A walk in Verulamium Park: strategies to develop the habitat and ecology of the park.* Led by Jon Green, SACDC green spaces officer. Meet at the Verulamium Museum steps, 7pm. Please wear suitable footwear.