

The Harpenden Trust

Christmas 2009

TRUST INCOME HIT BY RECESSION

There are relatively few organisations which have not been affected in one way or another by the recession, and the Harpenden Trust is no exception. Now in its 61st year of providing support to the people of Harpenden, the volunteers who run the Trust are working to minimise the effects of financial bad times on the Trust's work.

The Trust derives its income from a number of sources. Bequests are always extremely welcome, and the Christmas door-to-door collection is of major importance in providing the cash which allows the Trust to maintain its work. Income is also earned from the Trust's investments, and this is where it has suffered considerably over the past year or so.

There has been "a double

whammy". Firstly, the capital value of the Trust's investments has been hit by the recession. Secondly, with interest rates now — hopefully — at rock bottom, the interest earned on the Trust's cash deposits has fallen drastically.

"Like all booms and busts, this recession will be temporary," says the Trust's Finance Director, John Goodson. "The problem is that nobody knows when the recovery will come." In the meantime, the Trust aims not to cut back on its activities, but it cannot guarantee that it will not be forced to retrench.

"The people of Harpenden can help us this Christmas," John points out. "We know that there are many other calls on their family finances at Christmas time, but we would ask

them to remember the Harpenden Trust, and — if they can — to be even more generous than usual when our Christmas collectors call. If we could increase the amount we collect in our Christmas envelopes, it would help us towards maintaining our support for the more needy citizens of our town."



2009
Appeal

Please help us this Christmas



During December, our distinctive purple and white envelope will drop through the letterboxes of most homes in the town. Please don't ignore it. The Christmas Appeal provides a significant part of our total income, and without your donations we would certainly have to cut back on our activities. Also, please complete the Gift Aid Declaration on the back of the envelope. If you do, we can claim back a further 28% from the Government.

One of our collectors will call for the envelope. If you are out when he or she calls, please drop it in at the Trust Centre in Southdown, Barclays Bank in the High Street or Jelly's Meats at 97 Luton Road.

LOOK INSIDE THIS NEWS LETTER TO SEE SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH WE SPENT THE MONEY YOU DONATED LAST YEAR



SAFE HANDS FOR A DAY OUT

Harold is the driver-of-choice for Harpenden Trust's outings. He has been taking coach loads of Harpenden pensioners to the country and the seaside for many years, and the outings are always a special day's work for him. His familiar face behind the wheel is always welcome to those in his charge.

This year, the Trust organised three full-day outings to Clacton-on-Sea, and a half-day trip to Hitchin. All the outings included lunch, and at Clacton tea and entertainment were also provided by the Esplanade Hotel, which has worked in partnership with the Trust for the past few seasons. Years ago, there used to be day trips to places such as Bournemouth, Southsea and Ramsgate, but due to the increase in traffic on the roads, it now takes too long to get to these resorts; the Essex coast is the only seaside reliably within about two hours of Harpenden.

Pensioners on our outings always speak highly of the Esplanade Hotel at Clacton. There is always time for a stroll along the seafront, or for relaxing in the hotel's spacious lounge before Harold sets out for the return journey. Thankfully, too, we have usually been lucky with the weather.

If you would like to be added to the Trust's outings list please contact the Trust (details on back page). The outings are provided by the Trust without charge to pensioners.



SUPPORTING ANNA

Anna is a widowed mother who has lived almost all her life in Harpenden. When her husband died, there was little money for the family. Anna hated having to rely on state benefits to feed and clothe her children, and was determined to obtain a qualification so that she could get a good job, so she trained to become a nurse. Whilst doing this, she could not afford the costs of the necessary after-school care for the kids, so asked the Trust if we could help towards these costs. Today, Nurse Anna no longer relies on state benefits and now makes her full contribution to society — all with a little help from the Trust.

The problems facing some of our town's less advantaged people are diverse and often complicated. If invited to do so, the Trust can sometimes help, deploying one of a small team of dedicated volunteers to visit people in their homes in order to assess what is needed. Between them, these volunteers have a great deal of experience (some have been doing this unpaid work for many years) so

if assistance is needed, it can be given quickly and discreetly.

There will be many in Harpenden who will be surprised that there are residents who need the help the Trust can offer, but here are some examples of people to whom we have been able to provide financial help:

- The large Evans family where two of the children are showing signs of the spastic paraplegia they've inherited from their mother.
- Helen, a young mother who refuses to draw benefits and works in a supermarket from 5.30 every morning.
- Margaret, a pensioner who "inherited" her young grandchildren after her daughter died and her son-in-law vanished.
- Tom, a young blind man who lives alone.
- Gemma, a child with cerebral palsy who benefits from attending summer residential camp.

It's not always financial help that's needed — sometimes it's only advice



A BAG OF GOODIES AT CHRISTMAS

One way we spend your money is on food parcels at Christmas for pensioners. Many live alone on limited income, so a present from the Trust at Christmas is extremely welcome.

Records show that Christmas parcels have been a Trust activity for over fifty years. Back in the 1950s, many of the foodstuffs arrived from a supporter of the Trust who sent them from Australia! These days, the items are bought locally from Sainsbury's and

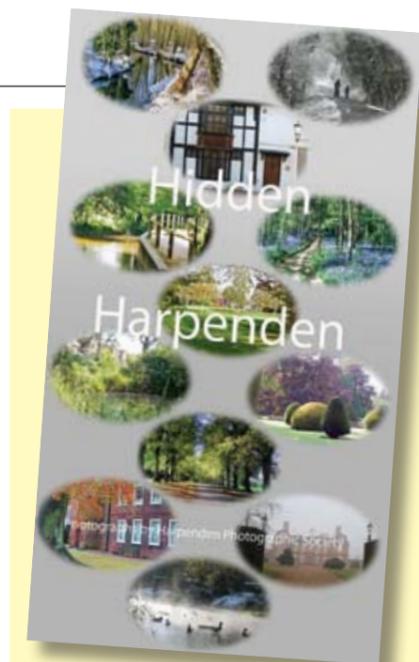
then sorted out for delivery. The great majority of each parcel's contents are non-perishable basic foodstuffs, such as corned beef, tins of fruit and rice pudding. But, since it's Christmas, we also add a couple of extras such as chocolate and sweets.

It will be a surprise to many in Harpenden that there are people in the town who need such help, and who appreciate someone calling with a bag of goodies and a few minutes' chat. But the Trust knows from half a century of providing such parcels just how necessary this service is.

and/or practical support. For example, we have arranged for a number of elderly residents living alone to have water meters fitted, thus reducing their bills. We also arranged for two public-spirited Harpenden residents to teach English to new arrivals so that they could get work. Then there was the blind pensioner who needed to get her fence mended, where we were able to supervise the quotation and repair. Sometimes, all we need to do is to identify the appropriate agency and put the Harpenden resident in touch with it.

The Trust's workers are careful not to tread on the toes of the professionals, and their voluntary status enables them to help in the same way that a friend would, to understand what is needed and to provide the necessary support. It's demanding work and the Trust's volunteers give their time willingly. But it can be expensive, too, and this is where your donation helps.

Real names have not been used in this article.



2010 CALENDAR

Now available from
The Harpenden Trust Centre and
Harpenden Town Hall

£4 inc envelope

All proceeds will go to the work of
The Harpenden Trust

HELP WITH EDUCATION

It is rather expensive bringing up youngsters these days, as most parents will be only too well aware. Education is free only up to a point, and there are some school costs which the state will not pay for — out-of-hours activities and education visits, for example.

Yet not all parents and guardians, even in our generally comfortable town, can afford to meet these extra costs. And unless the money can be found, pupils lose out on valuable and enjoyable aspects of their education, and can be marked out as being "different". Imagine the distress of a primary school child unable, for financial reasons, to spend a day on an educational visit with all the other members of the class.

This is where The Harpenden Trust

has been helping, even more this past year than in previous years. Most Harpenden schools know that they can approach the Trust confidentially for financial help when they have a pupil whose family genuinely cannot afford to pay for these extra activities. This year, we gave grants on behalf of 92 pupils, mostly for secondary school visits connected with the curriculum, such as field studies, art, history and language trips abroad. Some of the grants were to help primary school children, and there were a few in connection with higher education.

But it's not just school children who need help. There are youth organisations that need assistance — perhaps with equipment or special projects — and the Trust is often able to help those, too.

MONEY FOR HARPENDEN ORGANISATIONS

The Trust has a long record of providing financial support for clubs, societies and organisations in Harpenden, and it is proud of its record in helping establish some of the town's very worthwhile organisations like the Day Centre and the Courage Club. We are keen to help organisations in the town where they need funding for specific projects, and during the last year we have, for example, we have given money:

- To help fund the training of a cancer nurse at Grove House Hospice specifically to help Harpenden sufferers in their homes.
- To St Albans & Harpenden Stroke Club to help it provide respite care for carers in Harpenden.
- To buy equipment for the Upper Lea Valley Group to help its members clean up the River Lea.
- To help establish a children's playground in Batford.



Harpenden pensioners enjoying a day out.

BEHIND THE PURPLE FRONT DOORS ...

... of the Harpenden Trust Centre on Southdown Road are the best-value halls for rent in the town. They're clean and light, warm and well-lit, and there is an attached fully-equipped kitchen complete with crockery. There are recently refurbished toilets (including one for the disabled), and there is disabled ramp access to the front door.

The Trust is keen to offer these halls to Harpenden clubs and individuals, either on a one-off or a recurring basis. There is even locked storage available for those who book the halls for regular meetings. The venue is ideal for club meetings, for

educational purposes, dance and exercise sessions, tea parties, quiz evenings, one-off charity evenings or childrens' parties.

The larger Renwick Hall is a high-ceilinged, bright room with both natural and artificial lighting, and can accommodate 80 people seated or 120 standing. The current basic hire charge is £12 per hour. The smaller Randall Room, which can seat 40 people, or accommodate 50 standing, currently costs a basic £9 per hour.

Anyone who is interested in hiring or viewing the halls should contact the Trust Centre (see contact details below).



HEART OF THE TRUST'S OPERATIONS

It's only a small room, but it's at the heart of the Trust's operations. Situated at The Harpenden Trust Centre in Southdown, the Trust office is where requests for help, messages and offers of support arrive and are processed.

Doreen Campfield is in charge



of the office, and she has worked there for 15½ years since retiring from Rothamstead Research. She is supported by seven others, all eight of them being volunteers. The Trust does not have a single paid employee.

Doreen explains what happens if a caller asks for some help, for example with the cost of school uniforms, or for a much-needed item of furniture, or a request to go on one of the Trust's pensioner outings: "We do not make the decisions here", she says "But we take the details and then pass them to the appropriate trust worker who will contact the caller to see if we can help."

She reckons that no two days in the office are the same. "Sometimes we are very busy with callers, while

on other mornings the phone hardly rings and there are no visitors," she says. But confidentiality and respect are central parts of the work of her and her colleagues. "Those who ask us for help can be assured that we will take them seriously and follow up as quickly as we can. We can't help in every case, of course, but it always pleases me to learn that one of my colleagues has been able to respond positively to a request."

The office is open from Monday to Thursday each week, from 10am to noon. A member of the office staff will respond to messages left on the answerphone outside these hours. Contact with the office can also be made by e-mail. Contact details are given below.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Ring us on **01582 460457** at anytime. If the office is unmanned, you can leave a message and we will phone you back.

E-mail us at admin@theharpendentrust.org.uk

Call in and see us at the Trust Centre between 10am and noon Monday to Thursday.

Write to us at: **The Harpenden Trust, The Harpenden Trust Centre, 90 Southdown Road, Harpenden AL5 1PS.**



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service
2008**



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