

# Insight

Summer 2010

Proud Past Bright Future



Inside this issue

## Heritage Foundation Elections

See page 2

# New Shop Fronts

To complement the Town Centre improvement works, the Heritage Foundation has embarked on a continuing programme of refurbishing or re-instating a number of shop frontages.

*Insight's* front cover shows just one example of how restoring shop frontages etc.. can make such a difference to the quality of the shopping environment. Pictured are two retail units in Leys Avenue, 'Past and Present' and 'Shoe Box,' following completion of the works.

The old squire's Dairy used to occupy this site.



## Use your vote... don't lose it!

Every five years, Letchworthians get the opportunity, in a postal ballot to directly elect six new Elected Governors of the Heritage Foundation.

The Rules of the Heritage Foundation – the organisation's governing document – allow for up to 30 Governors. Six are elected; eight are nominated by clubs and societies and subsequently elected by these organisations and a further two, by North Herts District Council and Herts County Council respectively. The remaining 14 are appointed by the Foundation's Board.

Governors attend five meetings a year and

have a substantial voice in shaping the future of the world's first Garden City. Among the first to be consulted on major initiatives, they have a representative role in the community. All Governors are volunteers and do not get paid.

The last time these Elected Governors elections were staged, in 2005, 19,091 postal ballots were issued and 5,295 completed ballot papers returned, showing a 27.7 per cent participation.

For this year's election, North Hertfordshire District Council will supply details of the 14,636 voters on the 'Edited Register of Electors' for Letchworth Garden City. In addition, the Foundation openly invites any residents who exercised their right, to 'opt out' from having their details appear on the 'Edited Register', as some 10,802 did.'

To bring this matter to the public's attention, the Foundation has taken out adverts in the local

press and has more 'ads' planned before the closing date of July 29,2010.

Further details are available on the Foundation's website at [www.lgchf.com](http://www.lgchf.com) If you would like to register direct with the Foundation (or perhaps can't remember whether you opted out or not), please complete the coupon, left, or email [govrecruit@lgchf.com](mailto:govrecruit@lgchf.com) or call **Janet Machen on 01462 476057**.

### The timetable for these elections is as follows:

**After May 13**

Call for candidates to step forward

**July 15**

Closing date for candidate applications

**July 29**

Closing date for those voters who 'opted out' from their details appearing on the 'Edited Register of Electors', to register directly with the Foundation

**September 1**

Postal ballot forms and candidate information sent out to LGC addresses by the Electoral Reform Society (ERS), independent scrutineers, for this election

**September 30**

Closing date for receipt of completed ballot papers by ERS

**October 1**

Election results published on [www.lgchf.com](http://www.lgchf.com)

**October 12**

Top six formally appointed as Governors by the Board.

**Yes!** Yes I /we would like to check our registration or register direct!

Surname \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

We are registered as electors at the Letchworth Garden City address below:

House name/number \_\_\_\_\_

Road/Street \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete and return no later than Thursday, 29 July 2010, to Janet Machen, FREEPOST HI174, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, Suite 401, The Spirella Building, Bridge Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4GW

Valedictory messages – whether verbal or written – can often be rather excruciating, with those who have made a respectable living out of not speaking their mind, suddenly developing a backbone.

I have tended to share my thoughts over the years, (some would claim, too freely) so there are no insightful final messages for me to impart as I depart.

Suffice it to say that more than 15 years at the helm of the Heritage Foundation has been quite long enough. I leave with my sanity intact – allegedly – but having had the privilege of leading a truly remarkable group of people.

My Director of Property over almost all of my 15½ years, Marilyn Hands, is due to retire at the end of September and I pay tribute to her for her remarkable achievements. She has brought great intelligence, drive and commitment to her role ..... alongside the occasional 'stroppiness' which has been a joy to behold!

Peter Franklin and Allan Patterson played their significant parts as Directors in the earlier Foundation days and Alan Howard and, more recently, Ian Webb have made great, and ongoing, contributions. Alan, of course,

is Letchworth 'born and bred' and that has brought with it a passion to supplement his great professional abilities. Ian has brought great focus and discipline and improved the systems and processes in the Finance Department massively.

However, the Foundation has never been about just a Director General and other Directors. We have been, and remain, a team. I think that I am right in saying that only 12 staff remain from when I joined in December 1994 – Rita Cartwright, Jim Didd, Crecy Henson, Denis Hill, John Hillson, Jenny Marshall, David Middleton, Betty Roberts, Richard Smith, Christine Walker, Kathleen Wells, and Christine Woods. John Hollands has departed into his second retirement, just ahead of me leaving. Terry Gray (Mr Ed) just appears to have been here for decades, just as he appears to be an octogenarian.

Some great people have come and gone over the years, and I, for one, will always remember them very fondly.

## From the Director General



An excellent team remains, which my successor will, I am sure, feel privileged to lead. He will have a marvellous opportunity to build on the Foundation's successes to date, not least due to bankings of some £22m – about £21.75m more than I inherited in 1994, I seem to recall.

Equally important, sound business processes are in place, whether they be a robust Business Plan culture, Risk Management and Risk Register documentation, Business Continuity plans, comprehensive procedures and processes across all business areas, and a robust Internal Audit system. Yes, all the tedious things that only a few people in Letchworth Garden

City knew were going on in the Spirella Building!

**I believe that such a bedrock, aligned with the commitment, drive and determination of the Directors and staff who remain, will enable my successor, with the Board, to take the Foundation, and hence the Garden City, to even greater successes in the future.**

Goodbye.

Stuart M Kenny

# Biodiversity

**A new Biodiversity project at the Heritage Foundation owned Spirella Building is well underway.**

The Foundation's Sustainability Group – consisting of Foundation staff - came up with a scheme to attract bats, bird and bugs etc... by installing a range of different types of bird and bug boxes around the perimeters of the 86,000 sq foot business complex.

A variety of native plants to enhance the mix and lengthen the yearly season, have also been planted.

David Peace, the Foundation's Energy Performance Surveyor, told **Insight**: "We are enhancing the fringes of the car-parking area only, so as not to prejudice the formal appearance of the Spirella Gardens."

**The following have been installed – two sparrow boxes, three bat boxes, eight bug boxes, six standard nest boxes, six open fronted nest boxes and around 600 new plants and bulbs.**





Anglia TV interview with Charlotte Fisher



Railway station enhancement



Morrisons site with Hugh Harper, former TCP Chairman

# The Kenny Years Delivered

After over 15 years unstinting service as the Heritage Foundation's boss, Stuart Kenny, retires at the end of June.

Under Stuart's leadership, the Foundation achieved massive improvements in the Garden City.

Here is just part of the 'success story'.



Howard Cottage's new HQ site



Greenway opening with Kim Wilde

Charitable distributions of over **£27.3m ploughed back into the town** in the form of community facilities and grants to LGC clubs and individuals. This equates to a **daily investment of £5,351** since the Foundation started in October 1995.



Stuart visits local business



International Housing Design Competition with the Duke of Devonshire

## Town Centre Regeneration

Spearheading the first phase of the Town centre regeneration, [1996-1999] with the then Town Centre Board, which replaced 'ghost town' whitewashed windows with new shops and facilities starting with:

- The **£2m renovation** of the 1936 art deco **Broadway Cinema**
- **£750,000 refurbishment** of **The Arcade** and **The Wynd**
- The Hogshead and The Three Magnets [bringing in a combined investment of £1.2m]
- Morrisons 70,000 sq ft food store opened July 1999 and today attracting 35,000 customers to Letchworth each week
- North Herts College's £2.2m Goldsmith Centre

## Business Improvements

- The fantastic £11m regeneration of the Spirella Building; from a semi-derelict corset factory to prestigious award-winning, fully-let office space, opened in 1999, by Prince Charles.
- New business space development at Icen Court, Focus 4 and Lacerta Court and the old Power Station site for redevelopment
- Transforming the 1960's 'eyesore' former ICL building on Broadway to create the £5m business complex, The Nexus Building, also now fully let.
- Bringing about the redevelopment of the largely derelict Skill Centre site for housing development

## The Greenway

- The 13.6 mile (21.8km) Garden City Greenway, an idea he developed from an international design competition in 1997. Delivery of the winning scheme, created by landscape architects Illman Young, was completed in 2003 and was the Foundation's major contribution to the town's Centenary celebrations of that year.

## Sport

- Facilities for sport have been substantially improved thanks to the hard work of the town's clubs and the Foundation's financial support.
- Letchworth Garden City Cricket and Hockey Clubs moved ground to Whitethorn Lane to join the Bowls Club and then attract weightlifting too.



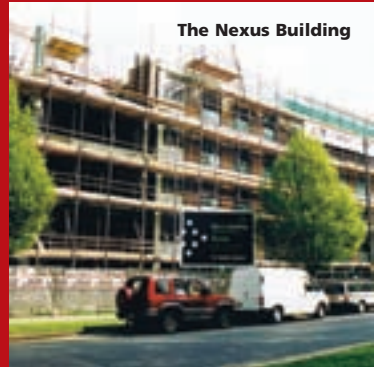
In action at one of 15 annual Town Meetings



BBC Look East interview with Kim Riley



Spirella Building



The Nexus Building



Stuart's bungee jump at the birth of the Foundation 1995



Prince Charles opens the 'new' Spirella Building 1999



Celebration to mark the re-opening of Broadway Cinema 1996



Search for a Star Competition



**Foundation Chairman Colin Chatfield told *Iz* insight:**

Stuart's invaluable contribution to this town and the Foundation has been immense over the last 15 plus years. His ability, dedication and energy will be a huge loss to Letchworth Garden City. On behalf of the Foundation Board, Governors staff and I am sure the many other people who got to know him over the years, I wish Stuart and his wife Yolande every success on whatever path they choose to take after the end of June.

**Value of the Letchworth Garden City Estate:**

1995 = £56m  
2009 = £144m

**Annual charitable distributions ploughed back into the community:**

1995 = £1.4m  
2009 = £3.6m

**Housing & Design Standards**

- The Tennis Club created a brand new Centre of Excellence at Muddy Lane alongside croquet and squash.
- Letchworth Golf Club is now one of the best in the County after massive improvement to both its course and clubhouse.
- In football, the County organisation, Herts FA moved their headquarters from St Albans to Baldock Road. Today, the town has two adult teams and there is also a thriving youth set-up, thanks to Letchworth Garden City Eagles.
- To support sports training, the Foundation introduced special 'Sporting Success' grants for coaches and players.
- The ground-breaking international housing design competition 'Tomorrow's Garden City': The competition, to create affordable, eco-friendly housing designs for Letchworth Garden City, attracted 67 entries from across the globe. North Herts Homes are on site, converting the winning, innovative designs into homes at Cade Close.
- Introducing new Design Standards for works to residential properties and clear, fair procedures followed by the Foundation and the Advisory Management Committee, in relation to considering applications for Landlord's Consent.

**Stuart leaves the Garden City much improved from when he arrived. Back in 1995, the Foundation inherited some substantial challenges and no money. Having funded the £8m Street Scene contract and major shop front restorations from its own resources, the Foundation now has both the planning permission and cash to deliver the major redevelopment of The Wynd.**



**Garden City residents united in War Effort!**

# Lest we forget!

**Residents of the world's first Garden City played their full part in the battle for freedom during World War Two – including raising enough funds to pay for a Spitfire!**

This intriguing fact and many others of Letchworthians' incredible contributions to the War Effort are revealed in the year long 'Letchworth Garden City in World War Two' exhibition that started on March 20 this year.

First Garden City Heritage Museum explores life in Letchworth Garden City during the Second World War. The special displays are packed full of objects, old photographs and interactive features.

Regularly changing features means that it is an exhibition to visit more than once.

An unsung hero of the War effort was the Letchworth Savings Committee, who set about fundraising with enthusiasm and dedication, raising thousands of pounds worth of vital War funds – an amazing amount of money in those days of hardship and self-sacrifice.

The people of Letchworth served the town and the country well. Whether they were enduring Wartime hardships, setting about work in the factories and on the fields, breaking Hitler's Enigma codes, or serving with HM Forces overseas with courage and pride, the residents of this unique town, made a special contribution to the Second World War.

- Find out about Letchworth's Spitfire, paid for by subscriptions raised by the town!
- See how strong you are by carrying a soldier's backpack!
- 'Take cover' in a Morrison Shelter.
- Have a go at making coded messages, similar to the German Enigma machine ... and find out how Letchworth people helped break the codes!
- Explore the lives of Garden City people, both on the home front and serving abroad.
- From June 28 – July 2 inc watch a series of classic wartime movies at Broadway Cinema.

The Museum shop has a range of dedicated World War Two merchandise - with something for all ages and budgets - including a range of wartime-themed publications - some exclusively available at the Museum.

With so many events going on at the Museum,

and with regularly changing elements of the exhibition meaning there's always something new to see, why not come back again and again? – and grab yourself a special reward in the process! Get your 'Ration Book' stamped each time you visit and when you've got four stamps you will be given a gift! You can even get one of your stamps by popping into the town's award-winning Tourist Information Centre in Station Road.

The Museum, at 296, Norton Way South, is open Mondays- Saturdays, from 10am -5pm. Admission charges are children under 16 free; town residents/students 50p; non-residents £1.

**The Museum can be contacted on 01462 482710 or email [contact@gardencitymuseum.org](mailto:contact@gardencitymuseum.org), or visit [www.gardencitymuseum.org](http://www.gardencitymuseum.org)**





# Under starter's orders for Festival

## LETCHWORTH FESTIVAL

**A bumper fortnight of diverse and exciting events is being lined-up when the Letchworth Festival celebrations take place from June 26 to July 11.**

### Industrious

Letchworth Garden City industries played an important part during World War Two.

Irvin Airchutes made parachutes (pictured above), K & L made bombs of all sizes, British Tab (later named ICL) worked with scientists at Bletchley Park on the decoding equipment that 'broke' the German Enigma machine and helped shorten the war and Shelvoke & Drewery produced aircraft parts and tank trailers, as well as a top secret midget submarine called the Welfreighter.

### Events

To accompany the exhibition there has already been and there will continue to be, a packed programme of associated events - visit the Museum's website on [www.gardencitymuseum.org](http://www.gardencitymuseum.org)

- The events include:
- A 'Make Do and Mend' Fun Day, making textiles, toys etc.. with Vanessa Stone 1940's
- Fun Day on Battle of Britain's anniversary, September 18.
- A talk by former pilot and Heritage Foundation Governor Arthur Creighton on 'The Dambusters'.

The biggest event will be the Letchworth Arts Centre's VE Day Celebration weekend on July 3 and 4. Aided by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, this will focus on the part Letchworth Garden City and its residents played in the Allies' victory in Europe in 1945 and ties in with the Garden City Heritage Museum's year-long exhibition.

On the Saturday, Broadway Gardens will be filled with music, fashions, exhibitions, refreshments and goods for sale - all with a wartime flavour. On Sunday July 4, the 'Yanks are coming', with American-themed music, food and entertainment. Both days will see a display of historic vehicles, the De Havilland Heritage Museum is bringing some of its prized exhibits, and there will be a special visit from the Hatfield Home Guard Living History Group. Guides and Brownies will display the uniforms of the 1940s. Additional activities will take place on the Arts Centre stage in Leys Square, where there will be more stalls, with a series of playlets with wartime themes put on at points across the town centre.

As part of the run-up, Garden City schools are working with the well-known illustrator James Mayhew to produce a book of illustrated memories of the War contributed by local residents. The children's work will be on display at the Arts Centre through June. In addition, there are school drama workshops, with actress, Jenny Ayres and a celebratory street party, with appropriate period refreshments, again involving local schools.

Other activities, co-ordinated by the Letchworth Festival Committee, start on June 26, in the new Leys Square, with a high kicking line-up of local dance groups performing all day. The following day the "Open Gardens" organised by the

Letchworth Arts and Leisure Group, invite you to enjoy up to 30 gardens; this year raising funds for the Parkinson's Disease Society.

On July 4, the Transition Towns movement has an "Open Garages" event, an opportunity for you to recycle those unwanted items to someone who has been hunting for just that thing!

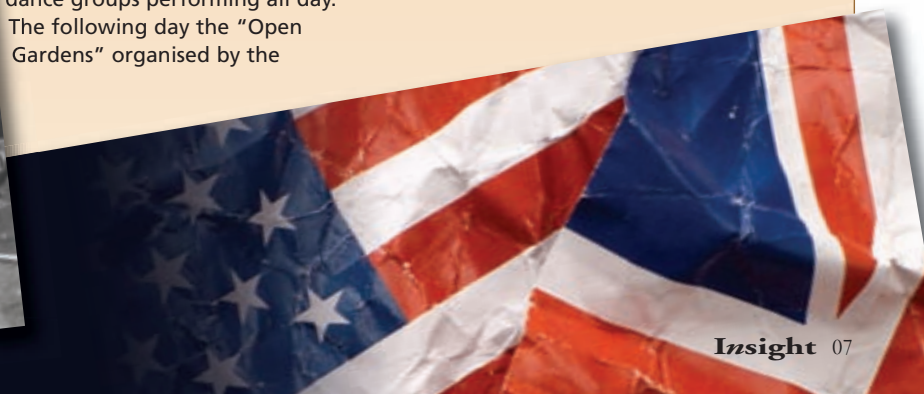
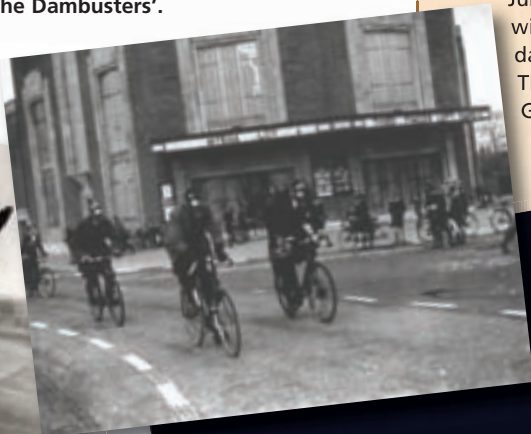
The Festival closes with Family Fun in the Park on Saturday July 10, in Howard Park, and the annual Willian Village Fair on Sunday, July 11.

In between there will be a great mix of talks, quizzes, guided walks, a fantastic wine and cheese tasting hosted by the Broadway Hotel, drama and cycle rides, together with presentations and displays by local groups, plus some surprise events.

This year's Festival promises to be bigger and better than last year's. It will provide a showcase for many local organisations to demonstrate their talents- there will be something for everyone.

Programmes are being delivered to all households in the Garden City and will also be available at shops in town. Many of the events are free but when tickets are required they can be obtained in advance at the Tourist Information Centre in Station Road. All the Arts Centre events on July 3-4 are free.

**Full details of the Arts Centre Celebrations are on [www.leetchwortharts.org](http://www.leetchwortharts.org), or from 01462 670788, while details of the wide range of other events are available on [www.leetchworthfestival.org](http://www.leetchworthfestival.org) or from 01462 679977.**



# New impetus for the Town Centre

**The Heritage Foundation's multi-million pound Streetscene Works – Phase One in a major town centre improvement programme – is on the verge of completion.**

The Streetscene works ( featured in the last **Insight**) is fully funded by the Heritage Foundation. Garden City residents will not be asked to pay anything towards the scheme.

Main contractors Skanska have received local and wide acclaim for its professional and caring approach and for a job " very well done."

**Radburn pupils – one of 14 Letchworth Garden City Schools – took part in a tree planting ceremony in Leys Avenue on March 30.**



International urban designers LDA Design explain the background of the design for the new Streetscene.

**LDA's Richard Allread writes:**

The Streetscene project in Letchworth Garden City forms part of an ongoing vision and aspiration to bring major improvements to the centre of the world's first Garden City, both in terms of the physical environment and the retail and leisure offer in the town.

The Heritage Foundation has worked closely with LDA Design to develop a scheme which responds to the rich history and design thinking associated with the town, in a contemporary way, to ensure proposals result in a beautiful Town

Centre environment which is relevant to modern uses and pressures.

One of the fundamental principles behind the project is to create a recognisable heart to the Town Centre while minimising street clutter, improving legibility and encouraging shoppers to extend their stay.

The importance of the environmental qualities of Letchworth is recognised and has inspired the work to revitalise the streetscene. In addition, extensive public consultation and discussions with local residents and businesses, as well as officers of the District and County Councils, have been undertaken through various meetings and working groups. The concept underlying the strategy and detail of the design proposals is to create a 'family friendly' accessible Streetscene, attractive to all users.

The Streetscene design has been heavily influenced by the context and heritage of the Garden City. One of Ebenezer Howard's concept drawings outlining the principle of Garden Cities, shows the significance of water as an important factor in forming a successfully functioning town, yet water has been largely 'missing' as the Garden City has developed.

Insight asked the designer of the sculptures at The Colonnade to explain his thinking

**Mel Chantrey writes:**

The sculptures, which will dominate a key entry point to the town centre, were conceived as part of a continuous landscape narrative, from The Colonnade to Leys Square.

The function of gateways or portals in the built environment is routed in history. They serve to focus entry/exit routes to urban occupation and, as such, their treatment may also serve as cultural and political devices that celebrate or record the values and history of those who erect them.

The three vertical bronze forms, together with a partial necklace of pavement water jets (by The Fountain Workshop) form a space that invites entry through it to a newly developed Streetscene.

The sculptural forms are intended to serve as iconic landmarks, visible from the railway station, key routes into the town centre and Leys Square. During the hours of darkness, they function as 'light beacons' that celebrate and energise The Colonnade. Their aesthetic form reflects and pays homage to Letchworth Garden City's historical past, whilst their conception, treatment and execution reflect contemporary approaches to the inclusion of art works as fully integrated elements within constructed urban landscapes. They aspire to inspire, to evoke and invoke the spirit and essence of the Garden City, whilst transcending time and fashion, having values and symbolic meaning for present and future generations of Letchworth.

The construction and development of the aesthetic and formal language that shaped the final forms was drawn from, and influenced by, a number of sources.

An elliptic, half circular form derived from the circular movement of water in a spring has evolved to inspire the enclosing structures for the Gardens and the ground plan for the water features.

The streets are also intended to develop opportunities for civic and celebratory use by the community. Market provision has been retained and enhanced in the Town Centre. Better links and proximity to the high quality green spaces of Broadway Gardens and Howard Park and Gardens that 'book end' the scheme are important in the sequence of public spaces and the quality of experience offered to both residents and visitors to the town.

## The Aspiration

The aspiration is to draw people, whether arriving at the train station or attracted on foot, into Leys Avenue and Eastcheap, the two main shopping streets and the heart of the city. A key component is the development of symbolic landmark sculptures that reflect the spirit of Letchworth and allows people to identify with their town.

In addition to the new sculptures, a series of new garden spaces are being created along Leys Avenue. The 'Leys Gardens' are designed to encourage families and others to linger and enjoy the new water features, seating and lush planting these spaces will include.

**Improved lighting** is intended to make the streets more user-friendly at night.

**High quality natural stone** has been used as the principle finish to both footways and carriageways to ensure an attractive environment that will naturally age and weather over time.

**New street furniture**, including seating, bins, cycle stands and directional signage has been installed, with careful consideration given to the position and arrangement of these items to ensure streets are clutter-free, while providing furniture at key points along Eastcheap and Leys Avenue.

**Extensive tree planting** proposals have been included in the scheme to retain a 'green' character.

**Three** – the number of elements, was the simplest geometry by which a space could be defined by a number of points, while it also referenced groupings of three in Letchworth's history, i.e. the Three Magnets, the three elements of the master key formulated by Letchworth's founder Ebenezer Howard, and the three oaks that marked its original location within the existing landscape.

**Foursquare our City (banner)** – this embroidered banner contained a number of elements that could be sampled and explored for their formal and symbolic values, e.g. torches, flames, light, natural forms colours and stylistic mannerisms.

**The New English Arts/Crafts Movement** – researching evidence of these movements that influenced the artisans and architects responsible for the built form of Letchworth provided valuable insight into styles and vocabulary used in buildings, decorative facades and gardens. In essence they express vitality, pattern and linear movement and it was those qualities which guided and informed the formation of the vessels rather than attempt to illustrate or emulate those movements. Their materiality - bronze is both referential and timeless, bestowing longevity and currency to objects constructed from it.

## The Creative Process

Designing the sculpture was a lengthy, but rewarding process.

In the summer and autumn of 2006, a series of meetings were held with the Heritage Foundation which explored their wishes for a unique landmark piece that would create a sense of place and fix historical values within Letchworth. A series of workshops were held, alongside numerous visits to Letchworth. Extensive discussions with the Foundation established the site scale, function and materiality of possible structures. In addition, discussions were conducted with tenants of shops and pedestrians in the vicinity of The Colonnade. The Director General was closely involved; his passion and commitment to provide something very special, both inspired and challenged me.

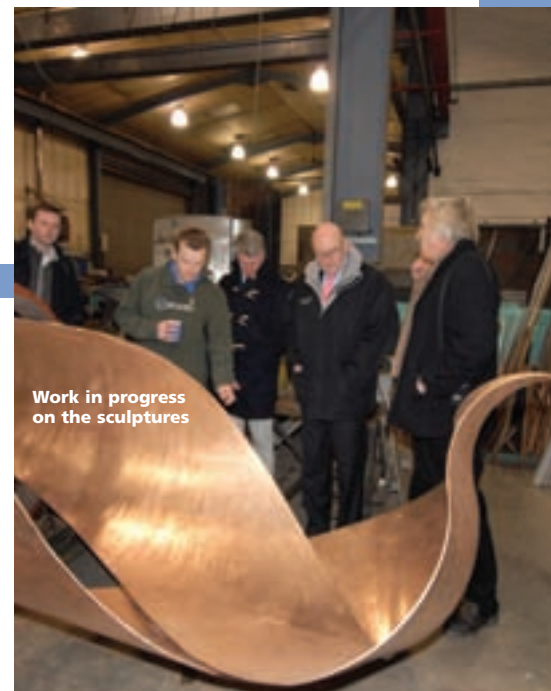
Overall, the Streetscene proposals will provide a lasting and attractive environment which recognises and responds to Letchworth Garden City's unique place in planning history and which will remain relevant and flexible for the future.

## A New Leys Square

A new Leys Square will create a larger space suitable for events and markets with a new water feature providing life, animation, interest and an informal play element to this space at other times.

This feature has been specially designed to ensure that it is an attractive asset to the Town Centre, while ensuring that current and future events can be maintained and there is flexibility to expand these in the future. A series of in-ground jets can be programmed to provide a range of

different water displays and can be switched off completely when the space is being used for markets and events. A large new timber seat in the Square will provide a place to meet and enjoy the new water feature.



Work in progress on the sculptures

It is notoriously difficult to identify seminal or defining moments within a creative process. However, a number of leaves collected in Letchworth on one of the site visits and later intertwined in the studio to form simple vessel forms, provided such a moment. Through a process of interpretation enabled by the construction of a number of paper and card maquettes the final forms emerged in the spring of 2007.

The renowned sculpture fabricators, Benson Sedgwick, who serve many leading sculptors including Anish Kapoor and Sir Anthony Caro, were responsible for the fabrication of the vessels. Their final forms were 'grown' from maquettes that explored and developed their character and construction. Whilst the construction of the vessels appears simple, their structural engineering and fabrication was a demanding process that took many months, combining state of the art technology with traditional material based skills, the results of which reflect the regard for values and collaborative processes held dear by the creators of Letchworth Garden City.

The vessels that create the Portal are, by their very nature, open to interpretation. They are intended to stimulate aesthetic responses, whilst inviting the onlooker to reflect upon their symbolic meaning and function. They are intended to welcome, inspire and embed themselves in the memory of those who experience them and become part of Letchworth's continuing history.

# 31 years and £96,000 later....

An informal meeting in a Baldock pub in 1979 led to the formation of a North Herts charity variety show group..... and 31 years later, Variety Express is still much 'on track'.



Some of the cast on stage at a recent Plinston show

The group founders – all of whom had been with other local groups before – could not have dreamt the group would be still very much to the fore today. Variety Express has performed many hundreds of shows – with one single audience topping 1,200 people and also has performed at other several top regional theatres and venues, including the Cambridge Arts Theatre. On the other hand, the group has performed many times at old folks' sheltered home (including most, if not all, of those based in Letchworth Garden City), to audiences of less than 30 on some occasions.

For the last 28 years, its main annual show has been staged at the Plinston, in

Broadway, in the Garden City, during the October half-term week.

The original Show Producer, Terry Gray, was in charge for the group's first 17 years and was followed by Linda Watson (eight years), Elizabeth Culpin (two), with Lindsey Head, the current Producer, who took over the reigns four years ago.

The aim of the group was, and still is, to raise funds for local charities and it has raised a remarkable £96,000 for numerous local good causes over the years. In addition to donating all the profits from shows, members have taken part in many fund-raising activities over the years, including parachute jumps, a jail break, pram and supermarket trolley pushes, etc.

Variety Express is always on the look-out for new talent and if you want to 'tread the boards' or help behind the scenes, contact Trevor Burton on 01462 685690. Members come from all over North Herts and include two of the original members, Liz Giddings and keyboard genius Geoff Page.

This year's show, as with all previous shows, will combine music, song, dance and comedy and is aimed at all age groups. Tickets are £8 and £6 for concessions and evening performances starting at 7.30pm take place from **Wednesday October 27, to Saturday, October 30**, with a Saturday matinee at 2.00. **Tickets can be ordered from Beryl Miles on 01438 223461.**

## Choir Hits The High Notes

The dream became a reality in January this year, when Tony-Ridgway Cole attracted a large 'audience' to hear his idea of forming a new community choir in the world's first Garden City.



Tony and the City Chorus.

The Heritage Foundation gave a £600 set-up grant to the choir.

Aptly named City Chorus, the Choir was formed and is open to everyone – regardless of their singing ability, age etc...

Tony, who leads the group, explained to **Insight**:

"I want to share my experience and love of music with as many people as possible. The rehearsals are run in a way which is relaxing and fun, yet structured, in order that the Choir is taken to a standard to be able to perform publicly. The Choir has made exceptional progress."

Regular rehearsals take place on Wednesdays from 8pm-10pm, at the new Salvation Army Hall in Norton Way North, Letchworth Garden City and there are over 50 members already!

Bookings for the choir are coming in very well, but Tony would like to hear from any organisations, clubs etc. thinking of making a booking by ringing him on **01462 677077** or emailing **citychorus@hotmail.co.uk**. Also, new members would be made most welcome – there are no auditions, just go along for a rehearsal or two, to see if it is 'your bag.'



Rock Legends Nazareth - live at Plinston earlier this year.

# What's on at **PLINSTON**

**Friday June 11**

Quiz Night with Barry Norman  
The popular TV presenter and author hosts another great general knowledge quiz in aid of The Valley School.

**Friday, June 18**

Disco Inferno

**Saturday, June 19**

'We'll Meet Again' – songs and nostalgia from World War Two

**Tuesday, June 29**

Toyfair

**Friday, July 2**

Live tribute to Freddie Mercury and Queen

**Saturday, July 3**

World War Two Gala Dinner and Dance in Spirella Ballroom

**Friday, July 16**

Soul and Motown Dance Party

**Sunday, July 18**

Letchworth and North Herts Scale Model Club

**Monday, July 26 –**

**Friday August 13**  
Plinstonkids Summer playscheme

**Saturday, August 21**

'Elvis – The Rock n' Roll Years'

**Friday, September 17**

Soul and Motown Dance Party

**Saturday, September 18**

Jump, Jive and Wail

**Thursday, September 23 – 25**

CAMRA Beer Festival

**Tuesday, September 28**

Toyfair

**Friday, October 1**

U2UK – U2 live tribute

**Saturday and Sunday, October 2 and October 3**

Mind, Body & Soul Fair

**Friday, October 8**

Disco Inferno

**Saturday, October 9**

Jump, Jive & Wail

**Friday, October 15**

Pink Floyd live tribute

**Sunday, October 17**

Dutch rockers Focus live

**Friday, October 22**

The Hamsters

**Monday, October 25-**

**Friday - October 29**  
Plinstonkids play scheme

**Wednesday, October 27 -**

**Saturday, October 30**  
Variety Express Charity Show

**Sunday, November 7**

Dolls House Fair

**Friday, November 12**

Charlie Grace on tour plus support 'Class of 58.'

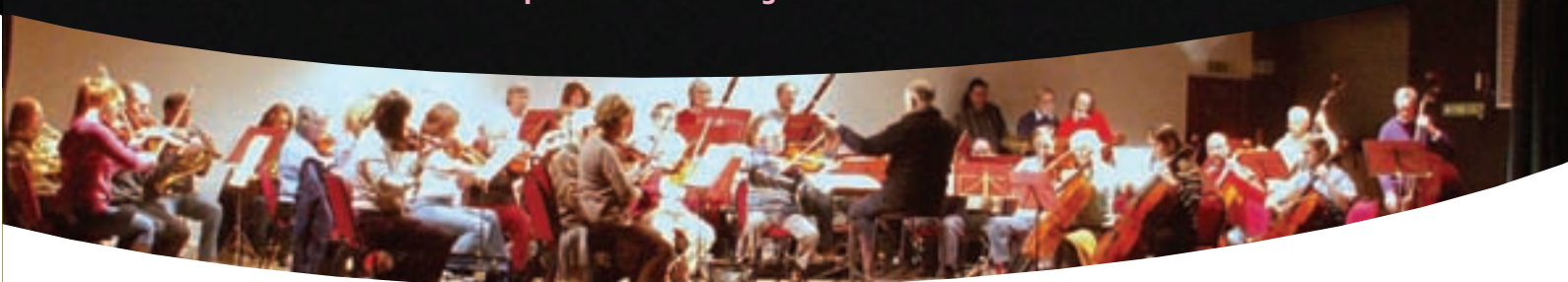
**Saturday, November 13**

60's disco night for charity

**Tuesday, November 23**

Toyfair

For more information about the above, plus new entries and tickets, visit [www.plinston.com](http://www.plinston.com) or ring the Box Office on 01462 672003.



## 'In tune' for over 25 years

Letchworth Sinfonia was formed by several local amateur musicians and the Musical Director/Conductor Kerry Camden. Three of the original members still play in the orchestra to this day, but sadly Kerry passed away in March.

The intention was that the orchestra would explore the repertoire for chamber orchestra (i.e. an orchestra with strings, double woodwind, horns, trumpets and timpani). Janet Hicks has been lead Violinist for some years after taking over from Diane Levitas, who was the first honorary leader.

Initially the orchestra started with 22 members, but has now risen to 30 regular players from Letchworth Garden City and the

surrounding villages and is still growing strong. The orchestra gives local musicians the chance to rehearse and perform up to three concerts each year and usually with a professional/student soloist.

On Jan 3, 2010, Letchworth Sinfonia performed its 25th Anniversary New Year Concert at the Plinston (photograph above) with the soloist Elise Campbell (currently studying at Royal College of Music) on French Horn. Kerry Camden was presented with a crystal carafe by Ann Parkhouse (founder member) to commemorate 25 years of conducting the orchestra. Over the last four years, the Heritage Foundation has given grants totalling £1,050 towards

these New Year concerts.

If you play a musical instrument and have been looking for an orchestra to join, then why not go along to one of the rehearsals or concerts. The orchestra meets on alternate Sundays from September through to July (term time only) at Letchworth Settlement, Nevells Road, Letchworth Garden City. For further information contact Amanda Taylor on 01462 625416 or [info@Letchworth-Sinfonia.org.uk](mailto:info@Letchworth-Sinfonia.org.uk)

**Letchworth Sinfonia performs its Summer Concert on Sunday, June 6, at the Letchworth Free Church, starting at 7.30pm. Admission prices are £10.00 or £7.50 for concessions.**



# Community Grants

Some of the community grants approved by the Heritage Foundation since our last issue of Insight include:

**£15,000** to the Letchworth Civic Trust towards Garden City residents going on to higher education.

**£20,000** to Norton Parochial Church Council towards its loft conversion project at Norton Parish Hall.

**£3,250** to Letchworth & District Astronomical Society towards a new telescope and equipment.

**£35,000** to Howard Cottage Housing Association towards its on-going Home Support Scheme, supporting the Garden City's elderly and vulnerable residents.

**£32,242** to North Hertfordshire & District Citizens Advice Bureau towards salary costs.

**£5,360** to Letchworth Corner Sports Club towards Clubhouse refurbishment costs.

**£3,500** to LGC Festival Steering Committee towards costs for the 2010 Letchworth Garden City Festival

**£16,800** to 12 Letchworth Garden City primary schools towards Information Communication and Technology (ICT) support

**£1,250** to Letchworth Garden City Bowls Club towards a new security shutter for their pavilion.

**£800** to Howard Cottage Housing Association towards education courses for their sheltered housing residents.

**£350** to Brainwave towards supporting a Letchworth Garden City resident to attend a course on Neuro-linguistic programming course.

**£700** to Letchworth Garden City & Baldock Lions Club towards its annual Christmas parcel campaign.

**£500** to David Smith, towards competition costs, as part of the British Bobsleigh team.

**£385** to Letchworth Music Club towards its String Quartet concert in October 2010.

**£250** to Letchworth Sinfonia towards its annual New Year concert on 3 January 2010.

**£700** to Letchworth Round Table towards the annual Christmas parcel campaign.

**£632** to Daniel Drake towards a voluntary trip to Nicaragua and Latin America with 'One Laptop per Child'.

**£600** to City Chorus towards set up costs, including music books, sheet music and T-shirts.

**£250** to Rhapsode towards a two-day workshop for Garden City children encompassing music, art and drama.

**£450** to Wilbury Over 60s Club towards transport costs for a day trip to Skegness.

**£210** to First Garden City Ladies Group towards transports costs to Dobbies Garden Centre, Milton Keynes.

**£800** to St Paul's Church PCC towards new stage curtains and curtain track.

**£1,800** to The Four Emblems Club towards new furniture for its function room.

**£1,000** to The Road Victims Trust towards a new Letchworth Garden City support group.

**£470** to Hadleigh Social Club towards transport costs for a day to Bressingham Gardens

**£380** to Grange Baptist Thursday Fellowship towards transport costs for a day trip to Pitstone Wharf

**£460** to Jackmans Over 60's Friends and Neighbours Club towards transport costs for a day trip to Skegness

**£350** to Amy Goodwin Davies towards Gap year costs at the University of Pennsylvania, USA

**£150** to Letchworth Chorale towards its annual Spring Concert.

## Sporting Success

**£1,000** to Whitethorn Wanderers under the Sporting Success grants scheme towards equipment costs.

**£780** to Letchworth Garden City Eagles F.C. towards coaching costs for four Eagles youth coaches.

**£8,667** to Letchworth Sports & Tennis Club towards 10 'gifted and talented' individuals

**£3,710** to Letchworth Golf Club towards equipment and 'gifted and talented' individuals

## Xmas lunches



40 Letchworth Garden City elderly, retirement and disabled groups received grants totalling **£7,080** towards Christmas Lunch contributions. That's 1,770 individuals 'tucking into' Christmas Lunches over the festive season!



## Greenway Leaflet

**A**n updated Garden City Greenway leaflet has now been produced by the Heritage Foundation. The Greenway was built by the Foundation in 2003 at a cost of £1.25m to celebrate the town's Centenary. The 13.6 mile (21.8 km) route around the Garden City is for walkers, and in parts, wheelchair users, cyclists and horse riders. There are a number of attractions to stop off along the route.

The 'refreshed' document includes newly planted orchards, new images etc... and is available at the Tourist Information Centre, Station Road, or you can download it from [www.greenway.org.uk](http://www.greenway.org.uk) or receive a free copy through your letterbox by calling the Foundation's Marketing Department on 01462 476057.

# Matching needs of modern shoppers

**Playing a vital role in the Town Centre regeneration programme is the Letchworth Town Centre Partnership, which represents the interests of retailers and businesses already operating in the heart of the town**

The TCP has been working on behalf of members for many years to improve trading conditions and ensure a constant flow of new and regular customers to the town. Recently it has undergone some changes itself, the most significant being the appointment of Lee Boswell as the new Town Centre Manager (pictured right).

Lee, who has a strong background in retail management with Mark & Spencer, has been brought in to give even greater impetus to the TCP's activities.

Lee told **Insight**: "I have a simple objective, which is to build and keep on building the number of paying customers visiting and shopping in the Garden City. We have a unique town with a wonderful history and people are fond of it. But that is only the start. We need to support schemes which ensure that the facilities and ambience of the town centre match modern demands and expectations.

"Every Town Centre business must play its part in making Letchworth Garden City the place that is first on people's destination list because it has that unique feel and the right combination of shopping and leisure experiences to satisfy everyone.

"The shopping experience and the visit must also be fun. So events are an essential part of our immediate and long-term strategy. The summer months are going to be packed with activities that will appeal across the age spectrum and galvanise the community.

"Our confidence is high despite the uncertainty of the economy and we are proud that the TCP is making a positive contribution to the future well-being of our town."



**Town Centre Calendar of summer events**

Subject to change and additions

**Saturday 22 and Sunday May 23**  
**Food Festival**

**Saturday May 29**  
**School Prom Showcase**  
Leys Square

**Friday 4 and Saturday June 5**  
**New Car Show**

**Saturday June 19**  
**'Hits From The Blitz' Concert**  
7pm at the Plinston, Broadway.  
Tickets, £12/£10 concessions. Visit [www.plinston.com](http://www.plinston.com) or ring 01462 672003 to book tickets.

**Sunday June 29 to Sunday July 11**  
**Letchworth Festival**  
A fortnight of events across the Garden City.

**Saturday July 3 to Sunday July 4**  
**World War Two Celebration**  
Broadway Gardens.

**Saturday July 3**  
**1940's Dinner and Dance**  
Spirella Ballroom, 7pm for 7.30pm.  
Two course 1940s dinner with 17 piece Big Band orchestra, OPUS 17. £22.50 per head. Ring the Box Office on 01462 672003.

**Saturday July 17**  
**Earth Day**  
Leys Square.

[www.shopletchworth.com/events](http://www.shopletchworth.com/events)



## Feast of fun down on the farm

**Something for all the family – Standalone Farm hosts a variety of attractions on its 170 acres of farmland in Wilbury Road, Letchworth Garden City.**

The working farm – owned and managed by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation – includes a picnic area, outdoor play area, and the exhibition barn contains 70 bird specimens, mammals, animal skulls, model dinosaurs, creepy crawlies and a working beehive.

View wildfowl in their natural habitat in specially constructed hides; visit the well-stocked shops with souvenirs/gifts and enjoy the spacious café area; see the cow milking demonstrations – and don't forget all the

animals – from pigs to chicks, ponies and donkeys to Alpacas, goats to an aviary and many more species and new to the farm last season were the Activity Trail and tractor rides.

The Farm opens from 11am-5pm (4pm last entrance) EVERY DAY from March 1 until October 31. Entrance costs are £4.95 (adults), children/OAP £3.95; registered disabled, £2; under two, free of charge. A Day ticket (admits six people with a maximum of three adults, is £19.95 and a family season ticket starts from £64.

A single season ticket is £21.50 (named person only) and there are special terms for school groups.

**Just ring the farm on 01462 686775 for more information or email [info@standalonefarm.com](mailto:info@standalonefarm.com)**



New!

Be There!

# Food Fest



**A diversity of food, deliciously presented by traders, tasted by visitors and sold; cooking demonstrations by professional chefs; local schools and North Hertfordshire College, activities for children, plus free admission – just some of the ingredients for Letchworth Garden City's Food Festival, on Saturday and Sunday, May 22 and 23.**

The event – organised by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation – is just one of many events on the menu in the Town Centre over the next few months.

The feast of different foods on sale by traders will include bread, meat, fish, jams, fruit juices, muffins and honey. There will be opportunities to talk with traders and learn more about the produce they are selling.

The 12 hours (in total) of cooking demonstrations over the weekend features Michelin Star Chef Phil Thompson, Restaurateur and TV Chef Paul Bloxham, The Country Bumpkin, cookery author Sally Bee, Xanthe Milton – Cookie Girl and other local favourites.

**For further information on the festival visit [www.letchworthfoodfestival.co.uk](http://www.letchworthfoodfestival.co.uk) or call 01462 476017**

# World Cup Fever

As the World Cup reaches fever pitch, test your knowledge with a special World Cup quiz in the Plinston's main hall, Broadway, on Thursday, July 1. Doors open 7pm.

Tickets are £6 per person (includes pie and chips). Teams up to six. Call 01462 672003 to book or visit [www.plinston.com](http://www.plinston.com)

- For those of you who enjoy a good general knowledge quiz, but don't know your football, on the Opening day of the World Cup, Friday June 11, there is a special Charity Quiz Night hosted by Barry Norman. A 'sequel' to the successful night hosted in November, all proceeds go to The Friends Of The Valley School for children with moderate learning difficulties and complex needs.



# Colin Jackson takes to the stage



**A former Olympic Silver Medallist, twice World Champion and World Record holder graced the stage at the recent Heritage Foundation's Sports Clubs Dinner in the Spirella Ballroom.**

Guest of honour and former top flight hurdler Colin Jackson inspired an audience of Garden City Sports Clubs and other invited guests on April 30 and focussed on the importance of grass roots sport. As well as sharing the highlights of an illustrious career as one of Great Britain's premier athletes of all time, Colin answered a range of questions submitted by the audience.

The event promoted the different ways in which the Garden City Sports Clubs have identified opportunities to develop their club and how they have linked with the Heritage Foundation to support that development.

In a keynote speech,

Stuart Kenny, Director General of the Heritage Foundation, highlighted the Foundation's long and continuous support to Garden City Sports Clubs – including through its popular Sporting Success Grant Scheme – and portrayed examples by featuring four videos, showing the 'success stories' of North Herts and Baldock Canoe Club, Academy Badminton, Letchworth Garden City Rugby Club and Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club.

Heritage Foundation Chairman Colin Chatfield - who is also Chair of Letchworth Garden City Cricket Club and Letchworth Corner Sports Club - rounded off a successful evening with a vote of thanks to Colin Jackson and presented him with mementos of his visit.



One of the oldest surviving bowling clubs in Hertfordshire is nestled behind the Three Horseshoes Public House in Norton.

## A backcloth to bowl for!

Its wonderful location offers a picturesque venue to play the sport with a great backcloth of the village's 12th Century church available from the green

Norton Bowling Club is one of the founding members of both the Hertfordshire Bowls Association and the Letchworth and District Bowls Association.

The club's membership ranges from age 12 up to those enjoying an active retirement and within this group there are members just starting out in the world of bowls and also experienced bowlers who have represented the County.

Club stalwart Peter Dean told **Insight**: "This diverse mix is one of the reasons why Norton has such a long history, as old and young, experienced and novices can come together in what is closer to a family

atmosphere than a sports club."

During the season the club competes in a wide range of friendlies, league and cup matches. On average there are three games a week, and there is always a chance to get involved and/or attend the Tuesday evening club nights during the season, which provides a perfect opportunity for some practice, or if preferred, a cuppa with friends.

But it isn't just about the bowls. Social events are regularly held, including quiz nights and race nights. The club also arranges a day trip to Cromer for a beach walk etc.. followed by a fixture against the local team in the afternoon.

Peter adds: "We always welcome new members with open arms, so why not come down to our club on our Tuesday club night

(please wear flat shoes.) Don't worry if you have never played before, our members are always willing to show you the ropes and give you some pointers."

**Alternatively, you can contact Peter Dean on 077010 29286, email [petedean@nortonbowls.co.uk](mailto:petedean@nortonbowls.co.uk) or Paul Bilson on 01462 684139, email [paulkbilson@nortonbowls.co.uk](mailto:paulkbilson@nortonbowls.co.uk)**  
**The Heritage Foundation has given equipment and social grants to the club over the years.**

## Sporting 'Knights'

**'Knights' of all ages have been heralding success for around the last 10 years – not on a table, but in a sporting arena!**

The North Herts Knights Basketball Club currently comprises of four teams from under 11's to seniors and boasts a wealth of talent across all age groups.

The Club was awarded a Three Star Accredited status, followed a short time later with the Club Mark Standard. A grant from the National Lottery's 'Awards for All,' enabled the Club to provide Basketball coaching and equipment into 25 schools in the area. The grant also assisted in helping to develop the club to what it is today.

The Club started when 15 or so friends got together from Letchworth Garden City, Stevenage and Hitchin and started to train and play at its current venue, the Knights Templar Sports Centre in Baldock – hence the choice of name for the club.

The Club has gone from strength to strength and is one of the biggest Basketball Clubs in the county. They have numerous coaches who look to welcome anyone who enjoys the game or who would like to start.

**For more information contact Chairperson Simon Tierney on [simon.tierney4@ntlworld.com](mailto:simon.tierney4@ntlworld.com)**



# Star Gazers 'On The Up'



**The Letchworth & District Astronomical Society is one of the foremost societies of its kind in the UK.**

Following its extensive programme of activities during 2009 - the International Year of Astronomy - numbers have grown from around 70 to 115. As a result, meetings are now held at larger premises in the Elizabeth Howard Hall, Norton Way South, Letchworth Garden City, at 7:30pm on the last Wednesday of each month - and there are also four additional meetings each year which features short talks by Society members.

The Society has an observatory at the Standalone Farm Centre to the north of Letchworth, which houses a variety of

instruments, including a new main telescope - a 14-inch computerised reflector.

The Society is also very active in the community, holding Public Astronomy Sessions at weekends in town centres, where people have the opportunity to do some safe solar observing, and possibly see the Moon and even the planet Venus. Astronomy sessions for schools, clubs and societies can also be arranged.

The main public events are the Public Star Parties, where everyone is invited to visit the observatory to see the wonders of the night sky - September 18 and October 16 are the

next dates, where there will also be a range of telescopes to use. There will also be refreshments, astronomy items for sale and talks on astronomy, all indoors, so there will be things to do whatever the weather. Entrance and parking are free.

**To find out more about the Society, visit the website at [www.ldas.org.uk](http://www.ldas.org.uk) or write to [info@ldas.org.uk](mailto:info@ldas.org.uk)**

**The Heritage Foundation awarded the Society with a grant of £3,250 towards the cost of the new telescope.**

## New HQ after 57 years

**The Letchworth GC Division of St John Ambulance moved into a smart new headquarters recently, leaving its well-known Birds Hill wooden premises after 57 years!**

The new premises in Lacre Way, off Works Road, include training rooms and a kitchen area and ample space for vehicles.

On Sunday, March 28, Stuart Kenny, Director General of the Landlords, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, opened the new unit and congratulated the Division on its sterling service in the area over many years and also for its amazing fund-raising efforts to fund the project. He added that the Foundation was delighted, through its grants system, to be able to fund a large proportion of the annual rent for the building.

County Commander Dr Chris Lund thanked the Foundation for its magnificent support as well as everybody else, who had contributed so much in time and money to make the dream a reality.



**Lt to R: Dave Larke, Tasha, Zena and Sophie Collings with Stuart Kenny**

# Insight

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