



THE ALTONIAN

ISSUE NUMBER 30 - SPRING 2010

The Official Newsletter of Alton Town Council -
published quarterly to keep you informed

A Saturday Market - what do you think?

Alton Town Council has been asked to consider allowing a one-year trial of a weekly Saturday Market in the High Street. Councillors are keen to obtain the views of as many people as possible before making a final decision, and the opinions of residents, shoppers and retailers are all being sought, so please take the time to respond. You'll find a survey form on the back of this *Altonian*, and a good return will be invaluable in helping us take the town in the right direction.

The town council owns the ancient Rights of Market, having re-acquired them in 1998. The Tuesday market was moved to the High Street in 2002, with the intention of halting its decline and boosting foot-fall for both the High Street and the market. This move has been pleasingly successful, with the market more than doubling in size and being considerably better attended by traders during the winter months.

Operation of the market is licensed to Southern Market Traders Cooperative Limited (SMTCL), and the income from this helps to support events in the town centre, themselves designed to bring in yet more visitors. The Town Council is now keen to increase the number of people shopping in Alton on a Saturday.

Many Hampshire towns, such as Petersfield, Havant, Eastleigh, Lymington and Totton already have successful Saturday markets. Alton is recorded as having a Saturday market on Kitchin's Map of 1751, but this had moved to Tuesday by the end of the 19th Century.

A Saturday market would operate in the same part of the High Street as the midweek one does now, although it would involve many different traders to those currently here on a Tuesday. The council already welcomes Hampshire Farmers' Markets for one Saturday each month, and the proposed trial for a regular market would operate on the remaining Saturdays. The High Street would need to be closed between Marks & Spencer and Turk Street, as it is now on Tuesdays.

How do you feel about this proposal? Please make use of the survey form on the back page to let us know.



A birthday gift with a difference will ensure that Alton continues to benefit from the commitment to life in the town of Sue and Ron Thorne. Last year they both celebrated their 80th birthdays and asked friends and relatives to donate towards 'something memorable'. Town Mayor Cllr Allan Chick is seen 'receiving' one of two new flagpoles for the Assembly Rooms Square on Crown Hill, the result of the Thornes' generous well-wishers' contributions. "We were overwhelmed by the kind response from friends and colleagues at the time of our birthdays and are very proud to give these flagpoles in our names to the town of Alton, in which, between us, we have lived for over 145 years," said Ron and Sue.

Sponsorship in any event!

Residents with ideas for new events in the town will now hopefully be able to realise their ideas thanks to a new event sponsorship fund in the town.

Since the weekly Tuesday market has been taken back by the Town Council from Alton Initiatives Management, who had previously used some of the market income to fund Alton activities, the council has ring-fenced the money to support and develop existing events. However, the new Working Party which is overseeing the fund (comprising Councillors and representatives from the Alton Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Alton Town Partnership), is keen to encourage new events, particularly those which will bring visitors into Alton. As Chairman Cllr Atul Patel explained: "Alton is rightly very proud of its varied and significant events programme. However, we know that the costs of putting things on can be off-putting and it is hoped that, by making some funding available, we might encourage those who have previously thought that they would like to run an event to come forward. Unfortunately we don't have the physical resources to take on the events ourselves, but we can certainly offer them lots of help and guidance if they have an idea and are willing to organise it!"

Anyone with a viable idea should send an e-mail to Greg Burt, the Deputy Town Clerk, via greg@alton.gov.uk

It's Time to Bloom - your entry form is overleaf

Thought for Food

The Alton Local Food Initiative (ALFI), working to encourage people to grow and buy local food, is to host a public meeting on Wednesday, May 26th from 7.30-9.30pm in St Lawrence Church Hall. Nick Rook-Blackstone ('OrgaNick' to many), a former organic horticulturist who now offers practical help to vegetable gardeners, will give a talk on the topic of 'Farming on a Garden Scale'. With a wealth of experience behind him, Nick has tailored his techniques to meet the demands of small scale production.

It's not just a chance to hear Nick talk: you can sample some 'Local Cheese and Chutney' with wine and seasonal local asparagus (available for a donation), visit a range of stalls, and join in small group activities, talks and discussions around the theme of local food.

ALFI members are also promoting seed sowing for everyone at the Mill Cottage Farm Experience Open Day at Andrew's Endowed School in Holybourne on Easter Monday, April 5th, and the annual seedling swap on Saturday May 8th at the Alton Spring Festival. To discover what it's all about with ALFI, call Lesley Willis on 01420 83416.



Alton | In | Bloom

Last year Alton retained its Silver Gilt status in the South and South East In Bloom competition for towns - can you help us flourish again...and perhaps even strike Gold?

PUBLIC GARDENS ENTERTAINMENTS

MAY		
Sunday 23rd	Songs from the Shows (Alton Operatic & Dramatic Society)	2.30-3.30pm
Sunday 30th	Alton College Jazz & Big Bands	12-2pm
JUNE		
Friday 4th	Poppy Wilds' Magical Machine*	2-3pm
Saturday 12th	Good Old Days	10am-6pm
Saturday 19th	Eggar's School	3-4.30pm
Sunday 20th	Basingstoke Silver Band	2-4pm
Saturday 26th	King's Pond Shantymen	(TBC)
JULY		
Saturday 3rd	Minden Rose	am (TBC)
Sunday 4th	Music from Amery Hill	3 -8pm
Saturday 10th	Last Night of the Proms	7.30pm onwards
Sunday 11th	Butserquest	11am-7.30pm
Saturday 17th	Strictly Showtime	6-9 pm
Saturday 25th	Bagshot Concert Band	2-4pm
Friday 30th	Big Foot the Clown*	2-3 pm
AUGUST		
Friday 6th	Wobbly Wizard*	2-3pm
Friday 13th	Teddy Bears' Picnic* (and Best Teddy competition)	2-3pm
Sunday 15th	Cactus Brass	3-5pm
Friday 20th	Pinky the Clown*	2-3pm
Friday 27th	Jester Giggles*	2-3pm
Monday 30th	Live On The Lawn	2pm-Dusk

* = Children's Activity (in Assembly Rooms if wet)

For more information, call Alton Town Council on 01420 83986 or visit www.alton.gov.uk

ALTON IN BLOOM 2010- OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Best Small Front Garden | 9. Best Retail Frontage |
| 2. Best Larger Front Garden | 10. Best Commercial or Office Frontage |
| 3. Best Domestic Patio, Window Box or Tub | 11. Best Licensed Premises |
| 4. Best Residential Premises | 12. Best Shop Window |
| 5. Best Neighbourhood, Street or Locality | 13. Best Scarecrow: for children 11 years or under [schools, groups, or individuals] - the scarecrow should be made of natural materials, and plastic faces are not allowed. No entry form is required, just take your scarecrow to the Assembly Rooms Garden on Saturday, June 26th. Entries will be accepted from 10am and the judging will take place at 12 noon. |
| 6. Best Public Building | |
| 7. Best Schoolchildren's Garden | |
| 8. Best Planted Unusual Container | |

Please be sure to circle your category	Please return this form to:
Name/organisation	Alton Town Council
Address	Town Hall, Market Square
.....	Alton GU34 1HD
.....	by 12 noon on Thursday, July 1st 2010.
.....	We wish you the best of blooming luck!

Grit answer to icy question

Don't be afraid to clear snow and ice whenever it appears! While we hope that these conditions are behind us as we look ahead to spring, the Town Council has sought advice from its insurers, Zurich, on the legal position of clearing snow from in front of homes and shops. Geraldine McFaul, the Manager of Zurich Insurance's Local Council Advisory Service writes: "If a member of the public decides to be a 'good citizen' and clear their own driveway and perhaps the area in front of the garden/footpath, then there is the 'potential' that a claim could be made if someone slips on this area. However, the onus is upon the claimant to show how the householder has been negligent. The claimant has a responsibility to take care of his own safety and this extends to making a decision about where to walk and whether it is safe to do so. Accidents do and will still continue to happen - this does not automatically mean that someone "was to blame". All incidents and any claims would be looked at on their own merits, and it would be impossible to give a blanket response to each one in advance."

Cllr Robert Saunders, Chairman of the Town Council's Planning & Transportation Committee, explained: "We know that many residents and shopkeepers would have been only too willing to do their bit last winter by clearing snow from their frontages, but were put off through fear of being liable if someone slipped over on any area they cleared. Unfortunately, it seems that some genuine concerns about Health & Safety do tend to sometimes get exaggerated, and to such a level that people are put off from doing what any sensible community-minded person would automatically do when we get such extreme weather. I do hope that this helpful advice from Zurich clarifies the position and puts this all too often heard misconception where it belongs!"

Meanwhile, the Town Council has been asked to help Hampshire County Council draw up a list of where new grit bins are needed around the town. Some years ago, HCC decided to no longer provide the bins, and the Town Council voluntarily took them over in Alton, adding a further 14 to the 10 originally in place. The Town Council, not surprisingly given the sloping nature of many roads in the town, already has a waiting list for new bins, as resources permit. However following the recent bad weather, the County Council announced that it would provide several thousand new bins across Hampshire, and it is hoped that these extra bins will help satisfy the current list in Alton. "We want to make sure that we haven't missed any important sites," insisted Cllr Saunders, "so we would be pleased to hear residents' suggestions as to where new bins are needed. We can't promise we will be able to satisfy all requests, because in a town like Alton you could put one on every street corner!"

Residents should write a brief letter before April 15th to Greg Burt, Deputy Town Clerk at the Town Hall, stating where and why the bin is required, and attaching a clear sketch map showing the suggested location. Residents are also requested to desist from taking grit out of the bins for use in their own roads or on their own drives. While it would be desirable to provide many more bins, they have to go where most needed; the grit in that bin is therefore intended solely for use on the road immediately surrounding that bin.

How to make your vote count

As election fever starts to grip the UK, *Town Councillor Beverley Carpenter* writes about the importance both of registering to vote and then of actually voting...

Time is fast running out for this parliament. Unless you never read a newspaper, listen to the radio or watch television, you must have noticed that there is a General Election in the offing. In fact, under our constitution, there must be a General Election no later than June 3rd of this year.

Any British or qualifying Commonwealth citizen or citizen of the Republic of Ireland who has reached the age of 18 and is resident in the UK is eligible to vote in a parliamentary general election, providing that they are not subject to any legal incapacity.

But it's not enough just to be eligible — you also have to be registered to vote. If you're not sure that you are, you can check the register of electors at the Alton Information Office in Cross and Pillory Lane. Nowadays it's possible to register during the year without the need to wait until next October, but please don't delay. No one, except the Prime Minister, knows for certain when the election will be held, and the closing date for registration will be more than two weeks before polling day. If you find that you're not on the register, the Information Office should also be able to give you the necessary forms.

OK - so now you're on the register of electors and fully qualified to vote in the General Election. But you could still lose your vote. If you think there might be a possibility that you will be away from home on polling day (and remember, we don't yet know when that will be!) then you will need to apply for a postal or a proxy vote. What's the difference?

A postal vote is just what it sounds like. Your ballot paper is sent to you by post about a week before the election; you mark your vote on the ballot paper and complete the postal voting statement and return both in the prepaid envelope provided. Your postal ballot can be sent to your home address or to any other address you specify, but if you are going to be abroad, you need to consider the time it will take to reach you and return. Anyone can apply for a postal vote, and you don't need to give a reason.

A proxy vote is where you appoint someone you trust to vote on your behalf. This is particularly suitable for people who will be abroad, for people whose work, education or training will take them away from home, or for people who are in hospital or unable to attend the polling station for reasons of ill-health or disability. Your proxy voter can also choose to cast your vote by post.

By now you're registered to vote, and you've organised how you will vote. The important thing now, is that you don't forget to vote. It has been disappointing over the past few years to watch the decline in election turnout. It must be especially disappointing for people in countries where they are still fighting to be able to vote, to see how carelessly some of the citizens in our western democracies treat our own hard-won right to vote.

If you want to know more about any part of the voting process, an excellent internet resource is the website www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

2010 Town Calendar

Date	Event	Time	Venue
April 8th	Crafty Kids	1-3pm	Assembly Rooms
10th	Farmers' Market & Craft Market		High St/Market Square
15th	Crafty Kids	1-3pm	Assembly Rooms
18th	Spring Wedding Fayre	10am-4pm	Assembly Rooms
23rd-25th	Charter Fair (Funfair)		The Butts
24th	Food & Produce Market	8am-4pm	High St
25th	St George's Day Parade	2.30-4.30	Market Sq/Mallings
May 8th	Spring Festival & Markets (F&C)		High St/Market Square
15th	Local History Day	10am-3pm	Assembly Rooms
22nd	Food & Produce Market	8am-4pm	High St
June 3rd	Crafty Kids	1-3pm	Assembly Rooms
10th-12th	'The Best Of Times'	T.B.C.	Assembly Rooms
12th	Farmers' Market & Craft Market		High St/Market Sq
13th	Victorian Cricket Match		The Butts
19th-26th	Jane Austen Regency Week		
24th	'Aurelian Legacy'	7.30pm	Assembly Rooms
26th	Food & Produce Market	8am-4pm	High St
26th	Alton Horticultural Summer Show	12.30-4pm	Assembly Rooms
27th	Alton Dist Companion Dog Show	10am-5pm	Anstey Park

Can they count on you? Charity Treasurer required

Home Start Weywater is a small, local charity providing practical help for families with young children. They are looking for a Treasurer to join the Trustees to look after their financial affairs. If you would like to know more, please contact Charles Kaye on 01420 80096 (or by email to charleskaye@hotmail.co.uk)

New Alton Community Centre

The Trustees of Alton Community Association are keen to hear from any Alton residents who would like to provide some input into plans for the proposed new Community Centre. Please phone Alton Community Centre on 01420 85057 to register your interest, or contact them via their website at: www.altoncommunitycentre.org.uk

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
 Town Hall, Market Square, Alton, Hampshire GU34 1HD
 Telephone 01420-83986, Fax 01420-542490
 Email: info@alton.gov.uk Website: www.alton.gov.uk

Full details of all of your Town, District and County Councillors (including their email and/or fax addresses) can be found on the Alton Town Council website, along with a full range of essential local phone numbers and useful points of contact

Alton's Spring Festival

Saturday 8th May 10-3pm



The town centre will be bursting with colour and fresh exciting ideas for everyone to take home. There will be an amazing variety of seeds, bulbs and quality plants for sale along with talks, demonstrations and activities aimed at all levels of gardening and self sufficiency.

With the Farmers' Market, Craft Fair and Farm there will be loads of great stalls to browse

Competitions for children so making a great family day out.



Changing Rooms really works!

Visitors to Alton's Assembly Rooms are already benefiting from the latest improvements at the historic town centre venue. Brand new heating in the Upper Room was commissioned in January, giving users a welcome as warm as that in the Lower Room, which was upgraded to new heating last summer.

The ladies' powder room to the rear of the building is also now offering a nicer welcome, this time thanks to new lighting, a revamped colour scheme, pictures and soft furnishings. Long overdue, the Changing Rooms-style makeover had been on hold until the roof on this part of the building was replaced.

Manager Jason Passingham said that yet more work is planned, including repairs to the main roof and refurbishment of the foyer and staircase area. "The various function rooms are all looking their best for many years, and we want to make sure that the communal areas in-between are equally as attractive and inviting to visitors. Not only do we plan to change the colour scheme but, if we are successful with some pending grant applications, we hope to install more attractive lighting and finish the restoration of the staircase. It's a very grand-looking building on the outside, and it is only right that we show that it was also designed to be equally grand on the inside," said an enthusiastic Jason.

Cllr Roger Fitzer, Chairman of Alton's Policy & Resources Committee, stressed: "Although these old buildings are very expensive to maintain, with bookings and income significantly on the up the council is pleased to be cracking on with various repairs and improvements."

Saturday Market Survey Form

Please circle your answers and return the form (no later than April 20th) to:

Alton Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 1HD

- 1) How often do you visit Alton's Tuesday Market?
 Weekly Monthly 3 or more times a year Less often
- 2) How often do you shop in Alton on a Saturday?
 Weekly Monthly 3 or more times a year Less often
- 3a) Are you more or less likely to shop on Saturday if there is a regular market on?
 Much more More About the same Less Much less
- 3b) Are you more or less likely to shop on Saturday if there is a Farmers' Market on?
 Much more More About the same Less Much less
- 3c) Are you more or less likely to shop on Saturday if there is an organized public event on?
 Much more More About the same Less Much less
- 4) Would you like to see a regular Saturday market in Alton High Street? Yes/No
- 5) Would you be concerned if the High Street between Marks & Spencer and Turk Street was closed to traffic every Saturday? Very Slightly Not at all

Your Street and Postcode : GU.....