

Notes from Community Breakfast 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023 recorded by Ray Munden

**Speaker: Sergeant Jon Vine, Hertfordshire Police**

Jon gave a very informative and interesting talk about his time and role in the Hertfordshire Police force. He joined the police after leaving the RAF and has had several spells based at the Royston Police Station as well as at Hitchin, Letchworth and Codicote. He likes Royston as it is large enough to have some problems (challenges) but small enough to be able to have an effect. He has worked hard to engage with youngsters in a productive rather than a confrontational way, which seems to be working very well with a significant reduction in anti-social behaviour. Royston Police Station opened in 1991 and was very well built and designed and was intended to hold high security prisoners, of which it has held some although not great numbers. On one noteworthy occasion screens were built because of concerns over the possibility of snipers during the presence of one prisoner! There are 10 officers based at the Royston and cover a large area, spreading to Nuthampstead, Biggleswade and to, but not including, Stevenage. While the front doors were closed to the public around 12 years ago, because of changes that reduced the requirement for the public to access it such as SatNav (no need to ask for directions) and the internet (can find information easily on the web) it is always staffed and there is still a doorbell that can be rung if the need for a personal interaction arises.

Interestingly the station includes a polygraph (a lie detection system), for which Jon was a pilot trial subject and which he found surprisingly stressful despite only being a volunteer. There is a room for virtual court appearances which removes the need for officers to appear in person at some court cases, saving in time and travel costs. He said that there had been some strange occurrences at the station which, despite his strong scepticism, indicated the presence of a ghost. The occurrences ceased after an exorcism! Possibly the biggest crime problem facing police in this area has been the theft of farm machinery. The innovative use of drones, and collaboration with the Cambridge force, led to the recovery of stolen vehicles, the arrest of suspects and a significant reduction in thefts.

A recently as three years ago youngsters were causing significant problems in Royston but, as mentioned, efforts to engage them and their families in a positive rather than confrontational manner has paid dividends. There was a drive to arrange for events for the children to attend. Examples are Saturday morning free cinema at the Royston Picture Palace and acting and singing classes. With the latter, mixing stronger and troubled children has led to the stronger looking after, rather than bullying, the weaker.

A question about the control of electric scooters was raised. Jon acknowledged that there was a problem, but it was difficult to address. Partly this is because of different rules applying in different locations but also, if handled adversarially, it could have a long-term effect on the child. For example if penalised it could result in 3 penalty points being added to a driving licence, when later possessed, meaning an inability to get affordable insurance and buy a car. There was a suggestion that dog walkers can make great eyes and ears for the police. John agreed and they do have someone who normally engages with dog walkers but has been off long term sick but should return soon and restart this initiative.

## Notes from attendees.

- Sarah Hillman: U3A (Royston); Current Affairs Group. Eligible local authorities (S Cambs & E Herts) will receive funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund the towards initiatives by businesses and community groups. E.g. new/improved community infrastructure (Sarah suggests maybe Village Halls) and providing essential community services/assets that benefit the local economy (transport?). LAs will decide what to support. More information at the website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rural-communities-up-and-down-the-country-set-to-benefit-from-funding-to-support-rural-business-and-create-jobs>
- Chris Lee: Repair Cafe; Royston Choral Society; Princes Trust. The next Repair Cafe is on Saturday 20th May - 2-5pm at Coombes Community Centre. The facility for booking in broken items goes live on 1st May via  
[www.facebook.com/RoystonRepairCafe](http://www.facebook.com/RoystonRepairCafe)
- Karin Weston: Rotary Club of Royston. The club continues to meet weekly, for the time being now at the Old Bull Inn. The club is organising the Historic Vehicle Show at the May Day Fayre on May 1<sup>st</sup>, so if you know anyone who has a vintage car, motorbike or other vehicle please encourage them to attend. Contact Ray at raypmunden@gmail.com.
- David Allard: Royston Ramblers; History Society: Ramblers have many excellent walks for those reasonably fit. Details at [www.ramblers.org.uk/royston](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/royston) for details. The Royston and District Local History Society have their AGM on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm in the Heritage Hall, Royston Town Hall followed at 8pm by an illustrated talk by Paul Barwick titled 'Alexander Litvinenko The Spy who solved his own Murder' and then refreshments. Members free, visitors £2. Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust, Church Tours take place, visiting various churches, on 17<sup>th</sup> June and 23<sup>rd</sup> September. £30 for Members and £40 for non-members including coach and tea. Application form from David.
- Ray Munden: Friends of Therfield Heath; Royston Wildlife Group; Meridian Men's Keep Fit. Regular FOTH monthly litter picks take place on the Heath, second Sunday every month from 10.00am. Litter pickers are provided and a free cup of coffee is available afterwards in the Heath café for each participant. No dates yet but FOTH have an interesting programme of events coming.
- Tony Garrick: U3A (Melbourn and District); Foxton Men's Breakfast; Royston Methodist Church. The next men's breakfast in Foxton is Saturday 15 April. Details at:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WSv033U2gDSqYdIRz9XsyWtCfVoSoLwluO\\_Uej\\_Hf4c/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WSv033U2gDSqYdIRz9XsyWtCfVoSoLwluO_Uej_Hf4c/edit?usp=sharing) or contact: foxtonmensbreakfast@gmail.com. Paul Earnshaw, an executive from Tesco, is the Speaker for U3A Melbourn and District talking about "The Hidden Story of Packaging" on 19 April at 3 pm at Eternit Sports and Social Club, Meldreth. Guests are welcome. Refreshments and bar available. Contact: melbu3a.org. Rooms available to hire at very reasonable prices at the Methodist Church, details from Tony.
- Reg Hounsell: Model Railway Club. The Model railway exhibition went well. The weather was good so outside train rides were very busy. We intend to hold annual exhibitions again. Next year's date is provisionally booked for Saturday April 13th 2024.

- Lisa Megraw and Mel Fenn: Royston Leisure Centre. The centre is collecting handbags for the Love Grace Handbag appeal. Also suitable items to go into a handbag are welcomed even if you have no handbag to offer. The handbags along with any contents are then donated to women's refuges.
- Joanna Aldridge: Social Prescriber for Market Hill and Barley Surgeries; Barkway Market. Joanna works to help people in the community who need help on various health related issues such as housing problems, autism. The merger of the Health Centre with the Granta Medical Practice is currently going ahead with their IT systems being integrated together. Barkway Market will be held on Sat 13<sup>th</sup> May from 10.00am to 4.00pm with 180 stalls present. Entry £4, children 16 and under free.
- John Froggett: Royston Radio. Royston radio provides on-line access to radio services for the community <https://www.roystonradio.com/>. Spots are available for all local organisations to broadcast about their organisations. Contact John at johnfroggett19@gmail.com.
- Paul Bowes  
**BOOKSHOP IN ROYSTON...BOW BOOKS** An avid reader? Exciting news. At last, after over 30 years, Royston will shortly enjoy the pleasures of its own independent bookshop again. Paul Bowes is preparing to open at 6 Angel Pavement, stocking a wide range of both new and secondhand books.  
 During the major part of a lifelong career in publishing and bookselling, for 25 years he was the proprietor of the widely-praised Book Castle in Dunstable, where he also published over 100 local interest titles. Having moved to Barkway two years ago, he is now keen to offer a similar service to our local town. Bow Books opens on June 15, followed by a celebrity launch via a signing session at noon on Saturday June 24 with bestselling author Jeffrey Archer. Donations of secondhand books are invited, as the shop will contribute monthly to local good causes, based on its turnover. Contact Paul via [paul.bowes12@btinternet.com](mailto:paul.bowes12@btinternet.com) [www.bow-books.co.uk](http://www.bow-books.co.uk)
- John Hedges: HealthAid Royston. Although no written eviction notice to leave the hospital has been received to date the future of Royston Hospital is under severe threat despite all local wishes that it be retained. Oliver Heald has had meetings with local stakeholders. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) say they have not made a decision on their estates plan yet. HealthAid Royston are making an application to list hospital as a building of Community Interest which will prevent the land being sold without public knowledge. Local residents should send their feelings about the hospital to local councillors, Oliver Heald and the ICB. Royston and District Community Transport is looking for a volunteer to focus on fund raising.
- Lynn Burgess (not present): Royston Library. At 7pm on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April at 7.00pm the library is hosting Paul Gitsham, creator of the DCI Warren Jones series, who will be speaking about his latest book. Tickets are £5, available from the library or online at <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/Libraries-and-archives/Libraries-and-archives.aspx>. A complimentary glass of wine is included in the ticket price!

Next Breakfast Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May