

# The Millennium experience in Alton - "beyond our wildest dreams"

ALTON  
GAZETTE  
OCT. 6<sup>th</sup> 1999

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Alton's Millennium celebrations are well in hand, according to business manager Mike Baker who made a presentation to the full Alton Town Council when they met last week.

The plans go "beyond our wildest dreams" said Council leader Cllr Peter Whitmarsh at the end of the presentation, and this view was echoed by all councillors present, including Town Mayor Pam Bradford, who explained how one of the Alton Millennium Maps has already arrived at a sister town called Alton in the United States.

The 17th century maps are already on sale as are Alton Millennium sweatshirts (£14.50).

Tickets are going well for the Millennium Ball to be held in Froyle this month, but as this is one of the main fund raising events for the other projects, residents are encouraged to bring friends and friends of friends to join in the fun. There will be a four course meal, the launch of Alton's special celebration wine, and the James Big Band as well as a raffle and the launch of the Grand Draw. Millennium Christmas Cards will also be on sale.

Porters on the High Street has put up a Millennium window display and the Millennium diary is now available at the commu-

nity centre for everyone to co-ordinate their individual or group events. The aim is to collect and display all the events happening in the area in the diary for everyone to refer to.

Next month will see the start of preparations for the planting of the time capsule at the Butts. A list has already been drawn up of items to be included.

In December an Alton Millennium mug with the town crest on one side and the Alton Millennium logo on the other, will be presented to all school age children (or younger) and these will also be on sale (£2.50) in the town.

On New Year's Eve itself, there will be two hours of live music from 10.30pm to 12.30am in the public gardens, providing a general focus for people of the town to gather and celebrate together.

The new year will be seen in with a bell peal from local churches and thanksgiving services throughout the town.

In March young beech and yew trees will be distributed to local primary schools to care for until their final planting. These trees will eventually be planted in the year 2001 to form an Alton yew copse which will last another 1000 years.

April should see the distribution of a souvenir publication.

The May Day weekend will see the main focus of fun activities in the town with the Alton Millennium Festival which is expected to draw thousands of people from outside the area.

Alton's market is the most valuable recorded in the Domesday Book and this, together with the discovery of pre-



The Alton Millennium Group recently held a competition in conjunction with the Alton Art Society, when they asked local artists for paintings of Alton buildings as they would have appeared in the 17th century. Left to right, Mike Baker, from the Alton Millennium Group, third prize winner Marian Kelland from Alton, first prize winner Margaret Hobby from Medstead and Geoff Thorne, alias Joshua Fletcher, from the Alton Millennium Group. (photo order CM/21) More Art Society details on page 3

cious Saxon artefacts, provides evidence of a thriving settlement more than 1000 years ago. There will be a 17th century market held in the grounds of St Lawrence Churchyard with games such as Knock Down Royalist dolls, archery, apple docking, the justice of a Pie-Powder Court, period buskers and stalls such as tailors, shoemakers, laces and ribbons, gingerbread etc.

In 1307 King Edward II granted Edmund of Woodstock the privilege of holding a fair in Alton, a great honour in these early days of fairs, and that weekend, Walls Travelling Fair will be held in the Butts from 4.30 to 10pm Friday to Monday.

Mr Alexander's Travelling Show will also entertain in the atmosphere of a traditional Victorian travelling show to be held in Market Square: a three man show of juggling, uni-cycling, magic and mayhem, each day of the festival.

The main attraction however, will surely be the re-enactment of the Battle of Alton of 1643 being held in Flood Meadows with marches through the town by troops from both sides. There will two re-enactments on Sunday and Monday and marches on Saturday and Monday as well as cameo performances in the streets. The arrival of around 7,000 troops in a town of around only 1,000 inhabitants must have made it even more spectacular in the 17th century than today.

Spin offs which have arisen from the Millennium Group's events include an art competition held by the Alton Art Society, in which members have been painting 17th century views of the town.

Fund raising has proved quite a challenge said Mike Baker and will eventually include funds raised from the ball, from the sale of a special Alton Millennium wine pro-

duced by Meon Valley Vineyards, the sale of the mugs, sweatshirts, maps, cards and programme, as well as raffles, a grand draw and an auction of various donated goods and services.

As main sponsor of the events, Alton Town Council was presented with a certificate of sponsorship at the meeting last week.

Lasting memorials which will endure through to the next millennium will have been set up in the form of the yew copse and the time capsule buried in the Butts and the festival will have "put Alton in the map", say the organisers.

But more importantly, they say, a large section of the community will have been involved and lots of enjoyable memories will have been created bringing the community closer together for the future.

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## Art Society exhibition draws to a close



Margaret Jannaway, vice chairman of Alton Art Society, presents the R Briton Riviere Trophy for the most popular painting in the exhibition, to Brian Barton for his pastel of 'Babe at the Barre'. On the left can be seen Brian's winning picture. (photo order CM/17)

The Alton Art Society's annual exhibition took place at the Assembly Rooms last week, with the public as usual voting for their favourite painting.

Winner was Brian Barton with a pastel, 'Babe at the Barre', a charming study of a very young ballet dancer, which he admitted had caught his eye as a postcard and which he decided would be worth painting.

Runners up were Arthur Copus and Margaret Greene.

A competition run in conjunction with the Alton Millennium Group attracted around 20 paintings of Alton

buildings as they would have looked in the 17th century.

Winner was Margaret Hobby from Medstead with a painting of the French Horn public house surrounded by fields and grazing sheep. It was painted from an original 17th century painting held at the County Records Office at Winchester.

Second place went to a picture of St Lawrence Church by Judy Rawlin from Headley Down and third place to another version of St Lawrence by Marion Kelland of Alton.

The quality of the works presented reflects the quality of Alton, said Geoff Thorne as he presented the prize winners with their cheques.

Judge of the millennium competition was Charles Richard, the painter of 17th century Alton as seen on the recently produced Millennium Map.

All the "millennium paintings" will be framed and exhibited in the Allen Gallery from