



## FRIENDS OF BUTTS CLOSE

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER

March 2015

### *Is it really here?*

Spring came last weekend: sunny days, blue skies and a warm feel in the air, even some hesitant buds on the trees.

Butts Close responded:





It's a lung for our town, a space to breathe in, where we can connect with natural energies.

People relaxed and strolled, kids kicked a ball around, or flew a kite. We knew summer was on its way, even though some snowdrops were still blooming, and crocuses were meandering across the grass.

### **Looking after it**

There was a second Big Hitchin Tidy Up day last year, on October 12<sup>th</sup>. Not so much litter as there was in April, and still worthwhile. Once again, big thanks to the Fire Crew and all volunteers of all ages, who scabbled and plucked on a thankfully dry day, across the eleven acres of the Close.

And also a big thank-you to the strange volunteer who seems to have managed a 2 ½ hour journey by public transport from London SW19 to help out...

The next Big Tidy-up will be on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April, 10 – 12.  
– Hitchin Forum will send out more details soon.



### **More Husbandry**

The Council has replaced the gate at the north end of the Close, on Fishponds' Road: functional but inelegant!

Hertfordshire's Countryside Management Service (CMS) will help put into place the Council's Green Space Management Strategy<sup>1</sup>, following an NHDC grant of £30,000. The Strategy was mentioned in the February



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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/rx-7024\\_green\\_space\\_management\\_strategy-v5-2.pdf](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/rx-7024_green_space_management_strategy-v5-2.pdf)

2014 FoBC Newsletter, and included new pathways and benches. The Comet<sup>2</sup> reported on the Grant. We followed this up with Lee Tyson, CMS Operations Manager. He told us that CMS would welcome input from FoBC members on their plans for the Close, and promised to be in touch after April.

### To the Barricades, or to the Check-outs? – revisited...



Photo courtesy of Simon Maddison

The last Newsletter mentioned the renewed threat to Top Field. Would Hitchin take this lying down? We needn't have worried. Butts Close played its part as host to the biggest demonstration of community support since – well, probably since Joseph Arch rallied farm workers here in 1873<sup>3</sup>. The Comet estimated over 1,300 people took part at the rally and on the march through the town, and the campaign received national news coverage and support from many major soccer clubs and their star players.

At the time of writing, the threat appears to have been abated<sup>4</sup>, but the latest position and further updates can be found on the web<sup>5</sup>.

### Did You Know...?



With Easter fast approaching, Thurston's Fair will soon be jostling space with Regiment Fitness. Travelling fairs have long been a feature of the Close, but it seems they used the lower – south – part, as this photograph from around 1890 shows. There's just one roundabout and a few stalls.

*Ellie, Helen, Stuart & Tony for FoBC, March 2015*

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<sup>2</sup> See The Comet (Hitchin Edition) 29-01-15, p.11

<sup>3</sup> See FoBC Newsletter June 2013, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> Our understanding is that since the developer did not make a planning application for the supermarket on Top Field within the time frame agreed in the break clause lease that the Football Club hold, the Football Club still has the best part of its current 25 year lease to run without fear of eviction. But the saga with the Cow Commoners will surely drag on.....

<sup>5</sup> See the Hitchin Forum website, and the Save-Top-Field Facebook page