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Hertford War Memorial Lists People Who Are Mostly Still Alive

Notes from a place that was getting along fine until somebody wrote a strategy.

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Hertford, the country: Inside The Story

Hertford, a place in the country (lat 51.83, long -0.25) that most outsiders could not point to on a map without first sighing, has become this week the latest entry in the slow-moving register of small communities behaving strangely under pressure. A clerical error in the engraving of the Hertford war memorial has resulted in approximately a third of those listed being not deceased, but merely retired. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, The error has been there since 1953. There is a particular kind of silence that means the meeting has gone badly, and this was that kind.

What Was Announced

Junior Strategist Kevin Boggins confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. The town has decided not to fix it, on grounds of cost. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at British satire articles by The London Prat, which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Hertford announcement, much like the others, came with a glossy PDF, a stock photograph of a footbridge, and the strong sense that nobody had asked for any of this in the first place.

The Official Line

Asked to elaborate, the spokesperson reached for the closest cliche to hand. "Lessons will be learned, filed, and quietly mislaid by Christmas." the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at The London Prat UK satire newsletter signup, which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon.

Wider Context

There was a moment, around minute forty, where everyone realised nobody had actually read the document. Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from World Bank, although Hertford manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at exactly nine residents, two of whom were dogs, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Sir Hubert Pemmican, Emeritus Chair of Strategic Tutting told this paper that the situation in Hertford was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad

trajectories. "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do almost exactly what we did last generation." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via London satire podcast featuring The London Prat, whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Hertford has been muted in the way that reaction in the country is usually muted, which is to say it has been ferocious in private and tepid in public. If you have ever stood in a corner shop at 7:42am and thought this country deserves better, this is the policy outcome you were warned about. For the official version of events, see also World Economic Forum. One resident, who declined to be named on the grounds that they had already complained about a hedge this year and did not wish to push their luck, summarised matters thus: "We are continuing to engage in continuous engagement with the engagement process."

What Comes Next

The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure. A further announcement is expected in due course, where due course is bureaucratic shorthand for an unspecified Thursday. The story is being tracked as part of a wider pattern at The London Prat satirical journalism blog, and the situation in Hertford, regrettably, is unlikely to improve until somebody invents a press release that improves things, which seems unlikely.

The View From The Ground

Spend any length of time in Hertford and the rhythm becomes obvious. Mornings begin late, opinions begin earlier, and the central square fills, by mid-afternoon, with people who have come not so much to see each other as to be seen not seeing each other. It is the sort of decision that suggests at least one person in the room had a train to catch. Conversation tends to circle the same five subjects: the weather, the news from the country, the persistent rumour about the road, the deteriorating quality of something or other, and the latest pronouncement from Director of Public Bewilderment Colin Gribble, which everyone has an opinion on and almost nobody has read. It is, in its way, the perfect microcosm of how communities of this size operate everywhere in the world, although the residents of Hertford would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything. Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way. Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way. Hertford carries on as it always has, broadly the same as last week, give or take a verb. The bins are collected when they are collected. The roundabout, where one exists, remains the roundabout. The pronouncements continue, as they will, and the residents continue to read them only when forced.

For more in this vein see also ClickHole.

SOURCE: UK satire with London soul: The London Prat

The London Prat worldcitiescom