

HATFIELD THIS CENTURY

Hatfield people explore their history from 1900

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NEWS LETTER

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The talk on the Home Guard in Hertfordshire by Lt. Col. Sainsbury on 25th September was reasonably well supported by members, supplemented by a good number of visitors. The subject matter raised many interesting points and the following discussion clarified a number of subjects which previously were accepted only as possible stories.

Our second members' evening on 22nd November was a most interesting story of the local Pankhurst family. Terry, our past chairman, detailed the connection of his forebears with the railway in Hatfield and district, and recounted his efforts to relate to the suffragette family. With the interest aroused in genealogy this evening it is hoped to be able to present another talk on getting started on your own family tree.

Following on the success of Brian Lawrence's Hatfield at War book, Sue Kirby and Dick Busby have had their Pictorial History of Hatfield published by Phillimore & Co Ltd. A comprehensive 128 pages with 175 illustrations it contains many photographs never published before and will serve as a reference for many a discussion of local history. It is available from the Library, Museum and bookshops.

On 17th November your committee was pleased to meet with members of the Education Department Activities Office of the local Co-op at Mill Green Museum. A most generous grant of £50 was handed over to enable us to purchase audio tapes for recording oral history interviews. Following the presentation and their expressed interest in this project, the visitors were given a conducted tour of the mill and museum by Sue Kirby.

Hatfield walks/ heritage trail. Gladys Brown tells us that an Old Hatfield walk was prepared by the WEA in the past. Covering the area of the church, old palace and old Hatfield this could be updated as a basis for a revised leaflet. Peter Kingsford has offered to supply past details of the Technical College, now the University.

Hatfield street names. This compilation is still in hand and a preliminary draft has raised a number of queries.

Who was the employee of the Lee Valley Water Co remembered in 'Spring Glen' and who was 'Haseldine' of the Barnet Water Co? When was Comet Way renamed and who can fill us in on Cllr. Bill "Skip" Day?

The Railway Mission. There have been some observations regarding the Mission, mentioned in an earlier Newsletter. It has been suggested that the premises used were originally two cottages which were combined to form the hall. This probably happened about the time that Gracemead and the St. Albans Road railway cottages were built. A further suggestion is that it was held in the old brewery buildings previously occupied by Bradshaws. Later, when most of the congregation were attracted to the Park Street Chapel, the building became the Salvation Army Citadel. Any further ideas or confirmation of these suggestions would be of interest. We know that there are a number of members who were either born in or were resident in the Right of Ways and we would be pleased to hear from them with their memories.

Brick making in the Hatfield District by Ron White

Recently Mill Green Museum was presented with bricks from the old Hatfield railway station. It's not known where these bricks were made, but in my researches of the Great Northern Railway I understand that a brickworks was established at Bell Bar to produce bricks for the railway buildings and bridges. Maybe these bricks came from the Bell Bar brickworks, although substantial structures like the Welwyn viaduct undoubtedly would have been built from Staffordshire blue engineering bricks because of their high crushing strength. Whilst perusing Ordnance Surveys of the main line and the St. Albans branch, I've discovered other brickworks in this district. On the main line the O.S. of 1898, 2nd, Ed. shows a siding into a brickworks at Mount Pleasant; later this became a County Council depot. On the St. Albans branch line at Hill End, adjacent to the hospital, there was a siding into a brickworks and this was operational until World War II according to the book of "The Hatfield and St. Albans Branch Line". Also there is an area in Hatfield Park called Brick Kiln Wood. Was this a brickmaking place?

The other brickworks that I remember was at the junction of Wellfield Road and Lemsford Road where the present Fire Station has been built. This brickworks was owned by Richardson of Park Street and was operational in the thirties but I'm not certain when it closed down. I remember in the mid-thirties being friendly with Harry Fuller of Briars Lane. His father worked there and daily, Mr. Fuller, dressed in his cap, choker and corduroys - his trousers leather belted below the knees - would trudge to work, smoking his clay pipe and carrying his tucker in his coloured handkerchief. Tragically his elder son, Herbie, died as a POW in Japanese captivity and Harry died after repatriation from the effects of a malady contracted in the Far East. It was during a school holiday that Harry and I paid a visit to these brickworks to see his father. I recall clay being dug and seeing the donkey tethered to a long pivotted bar walking round and round and round turning the pug mill. Hand made bricks were moulded, dried and fired. Where the clay had been quarried out the pit was infilled with household waste by the council.

Now the brickmaking craft has died out in this area. Anyway hand made bricks are expensive these days!

Newtown Reading Room At the general meeting of the institution held on Sept. 26 the following officers were elected for the coming year: President Lord Robert Cecil; Hon Treasurer Rev. N S Hodson; Hon Secretary Mr. T Tingey and a committee of 16 members.

Some alterations have been made in the arrangements of the Club for this season. The small room is now fitted up for reading, and reserved for that purpose, the larger one being for games and conversation. The papers taken in are as follows: Daily Graphic, Daily Chronicle, Herts Mercury, Weekly Graphic, Illustrated London News, Punch, Judy, Fun, Moonshine, Funny Folk and Tit Bits.

The games played are bagatelle, chess, draughts, cards and dominoes. All these advantages are open to members on payment of 4d per month. It is hoped that this notice may induce other inhabitants of Newtown to join the Reading Room, for the excellent building, which Lady Salisbury so kindly allows us the use of is large enough to accommodate considerably more than the 40 members who at present use it.

From the Bishop's Hatfield Parish Magazine, October 1892

Your committee extends

**BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS
AND 1996**