

HATFIELD THIS CENTURY

Hatfield People Explore Their History Since 1900

NEWSLETTER

SECRETARY: Mrs. C. Martindale.
EDITOR: F.J.Cox.

Group Events.

On file 7th July 20 members visited Salisbury Hall for an enjoyable tour of the de Havilland Heritage Museum where the exhibits were explained and described to us by Philip Birtles.

A talk and demonstration on tracing ancestry and creating a family tree, by Eric Balley of the Society of Genealogists was held at the Bill Salmon Centre on the 14th September.

A display of group projects and sale of books etc. will be part of the St. Michael's Art & Craft Fair at Birchwood on 26th and 27th of September.

On October 12th at 2.30 pm there will be a talk with photographs on Hatfield From the 1950s by Ken Wright, an official photographer for the Welwyn and Hatfield Development Corporation, at the Bill Salmon Centre.

150 Years of Hatfield's History will be the subject of a talk by Brian Lawrence also to be held at the Bill Salmon Centre at 7.30 pm on the 9th of November.

On 14th December at 7.30 pm a Talk and Music for Christmas will be presented by the St. Etheldreda's Hand Bell Ringers at the Bill Salmon Centre.

Your support for these events will ensure further activities in the future. If you need transport contact Chris on 269662.

MY ARRIVAL IN HATFIELD 1952

by Peter Kingsford

When I first came to Hatfield in December 1951 it was in order to be interviewed at County Hall for the post of Registrar and Head of Social Studies at the new Technical College. This was to open in September 1952. Forward planning was clearly the order of the day. In the morning I had to report to Dr. Chapman, the principal who had been in post for a year, in order for me and the other applicants - as well as those for the post of Resident Engineer who was also to be appointed that day - to be shown the new college under construction. All we could see was an enormous structure of steel girders which, though it did not seem possible, would be a college in nine months time. We could not understand why there was to be such a big car park in front. It was all very impressive and sharpened our ambition. After lunch with Dr. and Mrs. Chapman we arrived at County Hall, another impressive sight with its Latin inscription over the classical portico. John Newsome, S.T. Broad, Alderman Fern and others interviewed and appointed me. I was to start on March 1st instead of the normal April 1st so as to have as long as possible preparing for the opening, but where?

The Breaks then stood at the end of a long drive and in large grounds. I remember the great show of daffodils lining the drive when I arrived there for the Council had given us the first floor as a temporary College office. There was one telephone in the big house, downstairs on the ground floor occupied by Bill Salmon and the youth centre. Fortunately I had an excellent secretary appropriately named Pearl Topp, a Hatfield girl. After a while the Breaks became my temporary home for I grew tired of the daily journey to my home in Epping. When Ted Roberts arrived from Shrewsbury in April, as Head of the Commerce Department, he had nowhere to live so we took over two empty attics, installing our old army camp beds! Later on Dr. Chapman built his house in Chantry Lane with an acre of garden and Ted Roberts rented his house in St. Albans Road for his family. I bought a house in Brookmans Park for £3000.

There were no removal allowances then, you had to fend for yourself. Hatfield was a bustling town, de Havillands

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had successfully changed from war time to peace time construction and was occupied with the ill fated Comet and much else. The New Towns Commission was building the new town and parts, notably those nearest the college site, were completed. This was a bonus for us as when we appointed staff we could say that we could arrange a house or flat for them. At the Breaks about thirty college academic staff were appointed for the opening in September 1952. A number of Hatfield citizens helped to make the following years a success story. The high powered governing body included Councillors A.Booth and C.W.Lane and from de Havillands W.E. Nixon and Sqn. Ldr. R.W.Reeve. Local people also appeared on the advisory committees attached to each college department. This was notably so in Ted Robert's Commerce and Retail Trades Department where A.J.Challis, W.J.Duncan and R.C.Simmons were members. So Hatfield helped the College as the University now helps Hatfield. In College Lane, a real unlit country lane, there were the Old Fiddle and a small shop, useful for students, but Dr. Chapman, Ted Roberts and I would sometimes have recourse to the East Indian Chief at the top of Fore Street.

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of the 'wooden wonder'. The drawing was never returned or found. Speculation was that it was on its way to Germany, but one wonders if a Polish 'saboteur' on his initiative had lifted this secret drawing.

THE MILL GREEN

Trail

An attractive leaflet describing a historical walk around Mill Green, Hatfield has been produced and is available from the Mill Green Museum, price £1. Devised by Sue Kirby, museum curator, and local residents, the trail starts at the museum and wends its way along the original Hertford Road (imagine the current A414 traffic passing over the Mill race bridges!), through the village past the site of the demolished Crooked Billet and the 17th century Green Man with its original skittle alley, along the edge of Blacksmith's Mead. Cross the busy new road to join the old Ascots Lane and the route to Woodhall Farm and Stanborough Lakes, return past Leaside House built in 1895/6, and join the main course of the river. Here was the local swimming pool. Walk through the grounds of Bush Hall Hotel to see Turbine Cottage built in 1886 which adjoins the mill race which served the paper mill housed in Bush Hall before its refurbishment. Follow the trail to see where Bush Hall Lodge was, on the site of a smithy, poultry farm and cafe. Richmond Cottages, built in 1876/7 could be the earliest examples of dwellings common in Hatfield. Return along the lane to the Museum and complete your gentle stroll along the Mill Green Trail.

Apart from guiding you through the village the leaflet is a wealth of information on the buildings, their histories and occupiers. It even covers a brief account of the

Mill Green RAF Camp where service men were trained in the construction of airfields and roads. As a consideration of the support given to this project, members of Hatfield This Century may purchase a copy of the leaflet at a specially reduced price of 50p. Your voucher is enclosed with your current Newsletter.

The Eddie Chapman Saga

by Ron White

At the time of the events reported in the last Newsletter, I was working in the Plant Office and there was no suspicion of sabotage. Power was maintained backed up by an alternative supply. Repairs, reinstallation and clearing up of debris was carried out without delay. Subsequently I learned of the existence of a contingent of Poles, secretly housed in the top floor rooms of the parade of shops opposite DH's main gate. They were being trained for infiltration and sabotage of industrial works in enemy occupied Europe. Some succeeded in entering DH's works. The Power House superintendent, Charles Trethewey, verified that visiting cards attached to "notional bombs" from the Poles had been found in the areas of the Power and Boiler House.

The real event that caused a flap was the theft of a general arrangement drawing of the Mosquito, still on the secret list, about the end of September.

In October the BBC announced the existence

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