

# HATFIELD THIS CENTURY

Hatfield People Explore Their History Since 1900

No. 31

NEWSLETTER

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SECRETARY: Mrs. C, Martindale.

EDITOR: F.J.Cox.

## Editorial

The innovative monthly group meetings have proven to be well worth while with quite a good attendance of members and visitors.

The venue at the Bill Salmon Centre seems to be generally acceptable and the choice of Mondays - although restrictive to some members - has a majority approval.

Your committee is working on the preparation of further meetings for next year and hopes to arrange for more diverse topics of general interest. Your suggestions would be welcome.

For the time being no meeting will be held in January but a social "tea and natter" on the afternoon of the 8th February will give us all the opportunity to reminisce and comment.

It is hoped to have a talk on the Three Valleys Water Company in March. Look out for details on posters in the Library, Museum and local shops.

The display at the St. Michael's Fair was very

well received and created considerable public interest. Thanks to those who helped to set up and man the show.

A photograph of pupils and staff of Burleigh School in 1958, kindly donated that day, created much memory

**The Chairman and  
Committee  
send their good  
wishes for  
Christmas  
&  
every happiness in  
the New Year  
to all our  
Members and their  
Families**

searching to identify personalities. Perhaps this could be shown on our tea and natter afternoon? Do you have anything similar to bring along for discussion?

The story of DCMT, reviewed overleaf, prompts the question where are the personal stories etc. which

we need to back up the facts for our exhibition?

Reg. Coleman is still collecting information on the Birchwood area and thanks Joan Street for her comprehensive articles on the church and locality.

Brian Lawrence is researching the life and paintings of Beresford Johnson.

If you can help let us know or come and talk in February

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## Subscriptions

Please remember that subscriptions for 1999 will become due on the 1st of January.

Your cheque, made out to Hatfield This Century, should be sent to the Treasurer,

Mrs. I. Cox,

## LONE STAR

In 1940, Mr. A. R. Mills, working alone in a garage in Palmers Green, designed and built his first die-casting machine. With a partner, Sidney Ambridge, he built more machines and registered the company name Die Casting Machine Tools Ltd. known as DCMT. The company produced components for the Ministry during the war. Two ex-employees of the company used their service gratuities upon demobilisation to buy a die casting machine from DCMT to start the Lesney-Matchbox Company. Another ex-DCMT man, Jack Odell, founded the Lledo Company also manufacturing die cast model vehicles.

With the end of the war there was a big demand for die casting machines for the manufacture of toys. The Crescent Toy Company of Tottenham had been well known since the early 1920s for hollow cast lead soldiers and sheet metal toys and marketed early die cast items made by DCMT. In 1950 DCMT decided that if they could manufacture toys they could also do their own marketing and distribution. As a result the liaison with Crescent Toys ceased and DCMT set up its own sales and marketing division selling direct to wholesalers. Early DCMT toys included a pantograph for enlarging drawings and Harry Hayseed - a bicyclist which could maintain balance riding on a tight rope.

In 1950 a motorised bulldozer and an electromagnetic crane were marketed. Initially the trade mark Slikka Toys was used but the firm's fortune increased when they started selling toy guns under the name of Lone Star. The company's first gun was a realistic scale replica of an 1875 .45 calibre Colt Peacemaker modelled on a real example displayed in the Managing Director's office. With other versions of cowboy guns and accessories and diversification into plastic moulding, production increased to such an extent that the Birchwood factory, covering 40,000 square feet was opened in 1956, while the company headquarters remained at Palmers Green. Other Lone Star products included plastic figures from various historical periods, together with die cast accessories. Road-Master cars were another popular introduction as were the 000 scale locomotives, rolling stock and lineside accessories. Five 1:250 scale aircraft models included the DH Comet 4 in BOAC livery.

A new range of cars known as Impy Supercars was followed by Lone Star Commercials. TUF-TOTS was another series of cars, trucks and lorries aimed at the lower price market costing from only 1s.3d.(old money).

Expansion locally resulted in a factory being opened at Holloways Lane, Welham Green. Competition from the Far East in the 1980s proved too much and in 1988 the Hatfield factories were closed down when the

company was taken over by the German based Sohnnin-Esco group and operations transferred to Wetherby in North Yorkshire.

Compiled by Frank Cox, with excerpts from LONE STAR TOYS by Andrew G Ralston, a comprehensive and fully illustrated booklet obtainable from the copyright holder Malvern House Publications, PO Box SM2, Leeds LS25 5XA price £4.45 including postage.

## Letters . . . .

St. Albans

*As a collector of old photographs and postcards of Hatfield I have gathered together a good number of cards showing First World War troops in Hatfield. Some depict troops of the London Regt. arriving in Hatfield or marching through the town. I also have postcards sent by soldiers to family and friends which contain interesting memories.*

*I would very much like to build up a fuller picture of the activities of the troops in Hatfield at that time. It occurs to me that there may be some members who have anecdotes and other information which they gathered from their parents and others of an earlier generation. I know that troops were billeted around the town in Glebeland and in the Newtown. If any members have any knowledge or any photographs of troops in Hatfield during the First World War I would be very interested to hear from them. It may also help in identifying some of the precise locations of the photographs that I have.*

Brian Lawrence