

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

## Editorial

Sincere thanks to those members who have responded to the appeal for articles in the Newsletter. It was a marvelous surprise to open the mail and find such interesting items which are included in this issue, to the extent that we have had to include a topical supplement.

The attendance at our meetings usually totals about two dozen out of a membership of over 100 and people sometimes query where are the others? A large number of members live away from the town and their only contact, apart from paying their subs., is the Newsletter. That is why it is so essential to maintain the two way exchange of news, memories and comments. For those of you who cannot attend the meetings your letters and messages are always received with interest and often are subjects of conversation at our get togethers.

Thank you again for the items and please keep them coming!

### AGM

25 members attended the AGM and were pleased to accept the minutes of the last meeting, the chairman's report and the treasurer's report stating that the balance of the funds stands at £3500.05. Thanks were extended to Heather and Maurice Richardson for auditing the accounts.

Joan Cobern and Jim Parker having completed three years on the committee were prepared to continue so with a new nomination, Miriam Gaskin, were elected on to the committee.

A vote of thanks to retiring Brian Lawrence was unanimously approved.

Offers of assistance with committee tasks were gratefully accepted and will be resolved at the next committee meeting.

### VICE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AGM 9 MAY 2005

An active year and fairly eventful, but hard work for those involved.

We have had our full programme of speakers for the year, and well attended meetings.

Our very excellent news letters have been produced regularly throughout the year, with all thanks to Frank Cox without whom this would not happen. I am sure he would welcome any articles in the coming year.

We have changed to this rather nice venue, which was forced upon us by the sudden closure of the Swim Centre room. I hope you will all agree that it is very pleasant and convenient for location and parking. I see no reason at this time to leave here.

The Comet display at the Library proved most popular and led on to a much wider involvement with the Grosvenor House Hotel Group historians, culminating in a day's visit to the town, Comet Hotel and the Museum.

An interchange of information took place to the benefit of all concerned.

I understand that a further display on the Dove is in progress for later in the year. Thanks must go to Jim Parker and helpers for this work.

The Heritage weekend was run last year with a degree of success. But will not run this year. We cannot keep running the same events each year without a break or new venues. I believe WGC is to run events this time round.

The Groundwork Trust booklet came out this year with some small involvement on our part. Mainly from our chairman. Reg Coleman.

The de Havilland bombing memorial's poor condition was brought to everyone's attention and subsequently cleaned up and repaired courtesy of J. J. Burgess & Sons, Funeral Directors in Hatfield. Many thanks to them.

Oral interviews have made a tentative start again by myself and hope to make more of this during this year. Persons with a story to tell please get in touch.

A new membership secretary is urgently needed to help Frank with his ever growing workload. He is a stalwart member but he cannot do it all on his own. Please help.

My thanks and that of the chairman must go to committee members for all their work and thanks also to the museum staff for their assistance over the past year.

*Terry Pankhurst*



## **NORTH PLACE HATFIELD**

Due to lack of documentary evidence, the origins of North Place are difficult to establish, but it seems likely that it was built towards the end of the seventeenth century by one of the Earls of Salisbury, on a plot of land taken from the ancient demesne of Hatfield manor. The manor farmhouse itself (more recently known as Northcotts) which stood close by, was pulled down in 1971, and the present Northcotts flats built on the site.

Having always been the property of the Salisbury estate, there are no title deeds to assist in tracing the history of the house, and what we know of its occupants has to be gleaned from a number of estate rentals in the Hatfield House archives, and the series of land tax returns preserved in the County Record Office.

The name North Place in connection with this house appears only to date from the second half of the 19th century, the earliest reference so far found being in Kelly's Directory of 1878. The 1851 census described the house as Old Place. Confusingly, the census returns of 1841, 1851 and 1861 appear to give the name North Place to the neighbouring house, which later became known as Northcotts.

The records of land tax date from

1706, and although they do not identify individual houses, or even streets, by an analysis of successive schedules it is possible to relate the property for which a certain Mr William Newton paid tax of 1½<sup>d</sup> in that year, as the house now known as North Place. When he died in 1711 he was described as 'gentleman', a fairly precise definition at that period for someone of some social standing. He was succeeded in the tenancy by his son Thomas Newton, who is shown in the Salisbury estate rentals of 1730 and 1731 as paying £6 a year for the property.

In 1735 the Revd William Neale was residing in the house, the first of a succession of Hatfield curates who were to be in occupation till the end of the century. He was followed in 1748 by the Revd William Murdin, who whilst at Hatfield continued the work (begun earlier by Dr Haynes, the rector) of editing the State Papers of Elizabeth I preserved at Hatfield House, and published after he left Hatfield, in 1759.

Murdin was followed here in 1755 by the Revd John Cronkshaw, and he in 1758, by the Revd John Briggs, by whose time the rental for the house (together with a cottage) had risen to £12. The Revd Thomas Marsham was appointed curate in 1767, and his tenancy of the property, shown in the land tax returns and estate rentals, is confirmed by James Crow's estate map of 1786. Marsham, who was also a Justice of the Peace, remained

curate of Hatfield - under four rectors - for thirty-three years, until his death in 1800, and is commemorated by a memorial tablet in the Parish Church.

By 1824 North Place had become the home of Lieut-Col Fowle of the Harts Militia, and seven years later Dr William Lloyd Thomas, medical attendant to the Cecil family, makes his appearance - the first of a line of doctors to live at North Place for the next century. On his death in 1855 his son-in-law Dr Charles Drage continued the practice, until his retirement in 1912. Dr Drage also developed a large London practice, was noted as a forthright speaker at the British Medical Association, and had the distinction of having been medical advisor to four Prime Ministers, the Duke of Wellington, Lords Melbourne and Palmerston of Bocket Hall, and Lord Salisbury. He was also remembered locally for many years for inspiring enormous faith in his patients.

The practice was continued at Hatfield in turn by his son Dr Lovell Drage and Dr Alaric Ballance, who both resided at North Place. From 1928 to 1933 Eric Millar, secretary to the Rhodes Trust, held the tenancy, before transferring it to another doctor - John Lamb - the former partner, and successor of, Dr Ballance.

During the second World War North Place was requisitioned by the War Office. Following the cessation of hostilities, in 1947 it was let to Hatfield Rural District Council which, together with its successor authority, Welwyn Hatfield District Council, used the building to house various council departments. Since their vacation of the premises in 1978 the building has been let to a number of commercial companies.

*Henry W Gray, 2005*

## PEPPER HALL

My family lived at Pepper Alley or Hall in Chantry Green in 1841. This was mentioned in the first of the series of booklet about "Hatfield and It's People" page 14. Pepper Hall seems a grand name but was little more than a tumbled down hovel. Built in 1607, it's design would suggest a small open Hall House, later being converted over the years with a narrow central staircase and a partial upper floor with small windows cut between the existing timber beams at each end.

My Great Great Grandfather William Pankhurst lived there with a fairly large family and several lodgers. Not T. Pankhurst as stated in the above booklet. William, a lowly rat catcher, lived with his wife Martha nee Bligh, their sons, William, Edward, Mark, daughter Winfield, yes that is how her name was spelt, my Great Grandfather Arthur,

### SUMMER OUTINGS

The possibility of interesting outings was mentioned at the AGM.

Tony Lodge told members that the owner of Nast Hyde had offered a visit to our members at a date to be agreed. It would be limited to a maximum of 35 people.

Frank Cox told of the possibility of a visit to Queen Hoo at Tewin for a group of about 12 members.

Jim Page, following his interesting talk on Medieval New Towns could possibly organise a walk around Baldock, Royston or even St. Albans.

These are all provisional and subject to a volunteer organiser and sufficient interest being shown.

James and a final daughter, Sarah. The others in the house were Henry Bligh, a relation of Martha and Samuel and Susann(sic) Turner. Their relationship to the family is unknown. How twelve people fitted into such a small building is hard to comprehend.

In 1952 the house still existed. In our present climate I am sure the house would have been saved and restored, probably to become a "desirable residence" but in the post war years of the early 50s it was demolished as part of the new Hatfield development along with many sadly missed buildings. I have provisional notes and a wealth of detailed dimensions of it's construction made by the WEA at the time of it's demise, but these are incomplete and lack details on the timber infill, roof tiles and outside appearance. I have tried all the usual sources for information but to date cannot find a picture of Pepper Hall. William died in 1858, by then the family had moved to the more up mar-

ket New Town development at St. Albans Road Cottages. After being widowed Martha moved again, and in 1871 lived back at Chantry Green in Wall Trap Cottages, also mentioned in "Hatfield And It's People" page 11. Pictures of these cottages seem equally as elusive. I would be most grateful for any pictures of the two mentioned buildings and would, of course, willingly pay for copying.

Why do I want this information? There is a twofold answer, firstly to further my family history and secondly, because having the constructional details, I wish to build an accurate 1/24 scale model of Pepper Hall, so my wife, with her interest in dolls houses, can recreate what it may have looked like in 1841, in the process, preserving a little more of the past, in a different form.

*Terry Pankhurst.*



### The Jubilee Garden Mill Green Museum

Entrance Free

Cream Teas

#### *Dates for Your Diary*

*Monday 12 September 7 pm*

*Thursday 13 October 2 pm*

*Monday 14 November 7 pm*

*Thursday 8 December 2 pm*

*Programme to be notified*

## A FEW MORE MEMORIES OF HATFIELD IN THE '30S & '40S

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My parents moved to Hatfield (from Leicester) in the early summer of 1937, when I was 9 years old. We lived in a terraced house in Beaconsfield Road; my father worked on the railway (L.N.E.R in those days), so he only had to cross the road to the 'loco' to go to work. For a while, I was an enthusiastic train-spotter, rushing up to our front bedroom window dozens of times a day to enjoy the sight of famous trains speeding through Hatfield station - The Yorkshire Pullman, The Flying Scotsman, The all-blue Coronation and the all-silver Silver Jubilee. The lattice-work footbridge across to the Great North Road was a favourite place to take engine numbers, but rather smelly at times!

Railway employees (and their families) could use Privilege Tickets to travel at a quarter of the normal fare, so we made regular use of rail travel. Branch lines from Hatfield provided easy access to St Albans, Luton and Hertford, plus all the intermediate 'village' stops on the way. No need for cars!

I have rather vague memories of two particular pre-war events, both held in Hatfield Park. There was an 'Elizabethan Festival', and I recall being dressed up in appropriate costume of the period, complete with stockings, bloomers and the ruff round the neck! It was held on the south side of Hatfield House, and included much dancing and medieval music. The other event I recall was the agricultural show in the park. There were the usual fruit, flower and vegetable exhibits - all most impressive, but for me the most exciting memory

was of a display by Cossacks on horse-back. Many of the exhibitors came from 'other parts', and were taken in as lodgers by local residents while the show was on.

Before long, my train-spotting gave way to plane-spotting, as de Havilland's aerodrome was a constant hive of interesting flying activity. My favourite perch was on top of an old cement-mixer at the end of the houses in Manor Road; it provided a great view across the aerodrome, and if anything special appeared in the circuit, I could get there on my bike in time to see it land (just!). My growing interest eventually took me the other side of the fence when I joined DH's to serve an Engineering Apprenticeship, before settling in the Experimental Drawing Office in 1949.

I had only been employed at DH's for about a week when that famous V.1 flying bomb exploded in a tree in the corner of the St Audrey's school playground. I think it happened at around 6-6.30am. And another lasting memory is of the awful taste of old dust and plaster as the lathe and plaster ceilings came down on our beds, and the windows and doors were blown in. We had to go and stay with friends while repairs were carried out (to a lot of buildings of course), but we were able to move back in after 4 months.

My memories of St Audrey's school are fairly limited, having attended for only 2 years before the scholarship exam enabled me to start at the new grammar school in Welwyn Garden City in September 1939. However, my memory is of a well-run school, disciplined in the classrooms - supervised by Mr Oliver (Headmaster), and staff including Mr Grant, Miss Morgan, Miss

## EARLY FILM SHOWS

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I went to see a film at Campus West recently and it reminded me of my mother telling me about the early days of the local cinema.

Her brother, Harry Rogers was employed as a projectionist at the Embassy cinema in Welwyn Garden City.

She told me that after the film had finished he would pack it into tins and she would take them to the station, where she would catch the train to Hatfield.

Then she would make her way to the Public Hall with them. The Public Hall was Hatfield's cinema in those days so the films were then shown there.

One day she went to the Welwyn Studios for a film test. I asked her what she had to do .

She said she was filmed picking out sweets from a box of chocolates.

I never asked her if she got to eat any, but they were probably fakes.

That's as near as she came to being a film star.!

*David Cox*

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*Continued from previous column*

Godfrey, Miss Penn and Mr Paget - and quite boisterous in the (boy's) playground. Today, the discipline in schools seems to be reversed — too slack in the classroom, and much too strict in the playground. Such is progress!

*Peter Marshall*

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