

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

## Editorial

Your committee has been pleased to accept the offer from Heather Richardson to take over the office of treasurer of the Society. This has become an increasing commitment to Frank Cox who should now have more time to apply to personal and family affairs.

Heather has a great knowledge of the financial affairs of the society, acting with her husband Maurice, as auditor of the accounts since 1996. She was formally co-opted on to the committee in September this year.

The committee wish her well in this appointment and expressed full support in this necessary office.

Thanks were passed to Frank for his hard work in so many ways over the years. He will continue as editor of the Newsletter.

Another appointment for which your committee is seeking a volunteer is that of Publications Manager to receive and despatch orders for our booklets – not a terrible lot! – and to arrange for the occasional reprint of booklets, publicising and selling at functions.

Any offers?

## AN EPISODE CONCERNING THE HATFIELD AERODROME BEACON.

Ben French

As much flying as possible would be flown each day by trainee pilots but allowance had to be made when sending a pupil on a cross country flight in winter with the light fading in the early afternoon.

Two instructors were standing in front of the hangar, one anxiously looking at his watch. The light was fading and a Tiger Moth unaccounted for. A pupil had gone on a cross country flight and was long overdue. The hangar doors were opened to their full width, all surrounding lights were switched on, and the revolving beacon on the roof of the squash courts had been in action since sunset.

The unmistakable sound of a Gipsy engine was heard and out of the gloom a Tiger Moth appeared. All available cars were driven to the edge of the aerodrome and their headlights switched on, the pilot did a circuit and in spite of the poor lighting made a good landing, he taxied to the hangar doors and received a much deserved ovation.

After all the "Jolly good shows" had died down, the pupil explained that he had become lost and thinking he would not get

## Letters

*Hatfield*

Reg Coleman sent me a Newsletter which contained an article regarding the Hatfield beacon. I found it so interesting and it brought back many happy memories, real nostalgia. I think you are right that it was put into operation about 1934 as I can remember it being operational when I started at D.H in 1935. The beacon flashed a white light, no colours.

I think you may be interested in the article which I have copied from my "48 years in Aviation" story, I know it's true because I was there. This episode happened in the late afternoon winter 1937/38, at the time I was a trainee ground engineer on the Flying School.

*Ben French.*

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back before dark decided to look for somewhere to land, suddenly on the horizon he saw the flashing light of the Hatfield beacon.

The pilot told one of the ground staff next day that he expected to appear before the Chief Flying Instructor to be reprimanded for getting lost and carrying on when it was almost dark, he did not expect to be treated like someone who had just flown the Atlantic.

# WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

By The Late John Gray, Written December 1997

On November "Remembrance Sunday, 1997" I put on my Second World War medals and attended the service at Hatfield's War Memorial. I did not know the Town Council had kindly carried out major repairs and improvements to the Memorial which was unveiled on Sunday, 12 June 1921, two and a half years after the first meeting was held in the "Public Hall", Old Hatfield, on 19 December 1918 to discuss the Project. All inhabitants of the town were invited to attend.

The 4th Marquess of Salisbury chaired the meeting which set up a working committee to examine the various proposals put forward. By April 1919 Lord Salisbury presided at another meeting at which it was announced the working committee had rejected suggestions that the Memorial should take the form of a hospital, an Institute, or public baths. The committee felt it should be a 'pure' memorial. Sites had been considered and the committee reduced the choice to two - The Ryde field near to the junction of St Albans Road East and North Road and its present location.

Mr R Baker, one of the most eminent architects in England, who had been responsible for Government buildings in Pretoria and Delhi, had been consulted and was overwhelmingly in favour of the site where we see it today. Dr. Lovell Drage (whose surgery was in 'North Place', Hatfield.) put a resolution that the Memorial be put in St Luke's churchyard, but farmer Dan Crawford proposed an amendment that Mr Baker's recommendation be accepted. The

amendment was carried.

The estimated cost of the Memorial in 1919 was £1,500 and the committee hoped every inhabitant of the town would make some contribution to that sum.

In January 1920 a Mr Richmond (a partner of Mr R Baker) the architect of the Memorial asked for and was given a full list of the fallen in the Great War save for four names. Anyone having knowledge of the 'missing' four were asked to inform the Rector. Only Sergeant James Payne (of the 13th Royal Berkshire Regiment) of the four is included in the "In Memoriam and Roll of Honour" book which the Parish Council published after the 1914-18 war. One Godfrey Cross was another of the four who lived in Hatfield when he joined up and was killed-in-action in 1916. Why he does not appear in the "In Memoriam" book is a mystery. One can only assume the others were ranked amongst those to whom the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior is dedicated.

The report in the Parish Magazine of the unveiling of the Memorial says 140 of the Parish's sons gave their lives. The "In Memoriam" book lists 141, twelve of whom were Officers, one a Warrant Officer, eleven were full Sergeants and fifteen Junior NCO's. One Military Cross, two Distinguished Conduct Medals and two Military Medals were won by five of the fallen. The Parish, of course, in those days included Hatfield Hyde which has its own War Memorial.

A large crowd attended the unveiling ceremony and due to lack

of space in the enclosure invitations were strictly limited to immediate relatives of those commemorated, but room was found when these were accommodated to allow attendance of a large body of ex-servicemen who had been marshalled by Lord Cranborne (who became the 5th Marquess of Salisbury) on the Viaduct into the Park, thus to give better positions to the school children who were ranged just outside the Memorial.

A procession consisting of Hatfield Town Band, the Parish church choir, the Bishop of Exeter (Lord William Cecil, brother of the 4th Marquess) and clergy proceeded from the nearby Public Hall to be joined at the Park gates by Lord Hampden (the Lord Lieutenant for Herts), the 4th Marquess himself, Sir Hil-dred Carlile (who resided at sometime in 'Northcotts' a former home of Admiral Sir Francis Sullivan, son of the Vicar of Kimpton, and the premises of Hatfield Working Men's Club between the wars) and Colonel Halsey, OBE (who was Colonel of the 4th Bedfordshire Regiment in which many of Hatfield's sons had served).

The service began with the hymn 'For all the Saints' The Rev. E Hamilton read well selected passages from the Scriptures and the Rector (J. J. Antrobus) offered prayers. Lord Hampden reminded the gathering of how it had assembled on the anniversary of the battle of Ypres where so many of the men of the Parish gave their lives. After a short and eloquent

## MORE MEMORIES OF ERNEST JONES

Extracted from his life story (continued)

speech he proceeded to unveil the Memorial. The 4th Marquess read the Roll of Honour and many a lip quivered when the name of their dear one was called.

The Last Post and Reveille were sounded and relations came forward to lay wreaths at the foot of the Cross which was buried deep in flowers. Wreaths varied from those given by members of the Great Northern Railway (amalgamation with other lines to form the L.N.E.R. did not occur until 1923) in memory of their fellow men, to little bunches of flowers "In memory of father"

The Memorial, close to the main London to the North road, yet secluded and peaceful, is where in the evening and at the going down of the sun residents of Hatfield still remember them.

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### PREFABS

I would like to thank all who contacted me regarding information of living in the prefabs during the early post-war years. I received information from several residents who are still in the Birchwood area and from others who have moved away. The information gained has enabled me to build on my own knowledge of those times. I have now completed my research and the article I have written has been accepted for publication in a future edition of Hertfordshire Countryside.

With many thanks,

Brian Lawrence

Our first wireless was a crystal set, it was very fiddling trying to tune in for a station with the cat's whisker. One needed a wire from the set to a pole about 20 feet high at the bottom of the garden, if one was lucky one could get the station, using headphones.

In the mid 1920s, the Barnet By-Pass was being built. It ran near the bottom end of Union Lane and trees were cut down, which enabled us children to collect wood for the fire at home. Most of the men employed on the road building were Irish and they sometimes helped us to bring the wood home. We spent a lot of time watching the road being constructed. In the 1980s this road was widened and became the A1(M) motorway.

It was a recognised thing for us children to attend Sunday school and we all had a card which was stamped with a star each week for good attendance, it meant we could have a day trip to the seaside once a year.

I left school at 14. There was very little work about in Hatfield for school leavers at that time, so I started in the shoe repairing trade, but all that job consisted of was collecting and delivering shoes for ten shillings (50p) per week using my own bicycle. I next started to work at the railway station book stall in Old Hatfield, delivering papers and magazines with an increase of wages to 12 shillings (60p). This work I found more interesting, unfortunately when you reached the age of 16 years you were dismissed as the employer was not prepared to pay the National Insurance, which was due at that age. Once again I was having to look for employment and managed to get work as an under gardener at the Breaks, a gentle-

man's house in Hatfield. During the time that I worked there I met one of the maids (who at a later date became my wife). I gained a lot of experience in this work and eventually took on a job as gardener at Kennelwood House Hatfield. But in those days it was the same old story, everywhere one was expected to work hard with little pay. My wage at the time was 30 shillings (£1.50p) a week. After a time I left this job and became my own boss, taking on any type of work that came my way.

In 1935 I married Jess, the maid I met when I was 16 It always seemed to be a problem for newly-weds to find somewhere to live but we were lucky, we had the chance to go and stay with my grandmother in Old Welwyn until we were able to get a house in Hatfield. I used to cycle back and forth to Hatfield each working day which was no joke, there were no buses early in the morning. After about two years we managed to get a house in Hatfield, it was a small cottage in Union Lane, two rooms up and two down, no bathroom or water, our water supply was from a well in a yard at the back of the house drawn up in a bucket by a chain, the lavatory was in a shed at the bottom of the yard with the same method as the house where I lived as a boy, with gas laid on for cooking and lighting. We lived there for two years and during that time the house was partly modernised which gave us running water and a flush toilet and so did away with the old well.

In 1938 we were offered larger accommodation by the Hatfield Council, It was a three bed roomed house with bathroom, toilet, gas, electric, and a nice big garden. To Jess and I it was a dream come true.



New Spreading Machines leaving our Works

## STARKEY ENGINEERING COMPANY

Mill Green Works,  
HATFIELD, Herts.

PRECISION & GENERAL ENGINEERS

Patentees and Manufacturers of  
Agricultural and Special Purpose Machines



## GONE!

With the recent demolition of the workshops of Starkey Engineering Co. yet another historic site has gone from Hatfield. It was in 1820 that Joseph Fletcher Starkey from Bengoe started his blacksmith business in a cottage on the bank at Mill Green. After his

death in 1838 his son Thomas carried on the business until 1886 when his son Alfred John continued until 1919. In the meantime The Laurels was erected by Lord Salisbury in 1889 when the family became too large for the cottage, at a cost of £564.3.3. The business was known as A.J.Starkey & Sons and was handed down to another Alfred John who died in 1948. Thereafter it was carried on by David James and his brother Leonard Alfred Starkey and the name changed to Starkey Engineering Co. The family vacated The Laurels in 1968 but the business continued until 1978. F.C.

## Meetings Spring 2007

Thursday 8 February 2.30  
**“I’ve Come About The Drains”**

By  
Tony Rook  
A Completely New Look at Roman Architecture

Monday 12 March 7.30  
**Thames Sailing Barges**

Their Past and Present  
By  
Ken Cain

Thursday 12 April 2.30  
**The Royal Gunpowder Mills**

A History  
By  
David Sims

Monday 14 May 7.30  
**AGM**

Followed by  
**Leaving No Stone Unturned**  
A Talk on Monumental Inscriptions  
By  
John Pearson  
Secretary of Herts Family History Society

## OUR AVIATION HERITAGE

It is proposed to commence a project to record Hatfield’s aviation history and activity. Resulting from this an archive could be prepared and stored locally where people could access it for information or research.

Initially a meeting will be arranged in the new year to view slides, photographs, articles etc. and to exchange memories and information. From this an assessment could be made to gauge the interest and to plan for further meetings.

For further information and offers of help in providing photos information etc please contact

Reg Coleman

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