

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

Editorial

At the seventeenth AGM held on the 14th May the chairman, Terry Pankhurst, reported a quiet year for the Society. Newsletters had been sent out regularly and the visit to Great Nast Hyde House was greatly enjoyed, thanks to those involved.

The December open meeting was a success and because of this we have added an extra similar meeting in July.

We are taking part in several events this coming year as listed on page 4 of this Newsletter. An hour or two to help by members before, during and/or after these events would be very much appreciated.

Terry thanked the committee members for their work and support, particularly Tony Lodge and Miriam Gaskin who have had to resign for personal reasons.

Frank Cox reported on the satisfactory state of our finances with a balance of £3740.29 at the bank. Currently we have 120 members. He will formally be resigning as treasurer but nominated Heather Richardson to fill the vacancy, which was confirmed at the subsequent committee meeting.

Thanks were extended to Maurice Richardson for auditing the accounts and for offering to do so again next year.

An interesting talk on monumental inscriptions by John Pearson followed the business.

AERONAUTICAL RESEARCH INITIATIVE

The new DH/British Aerospace Research Initiative run by Reg. Coleman is under way. So much has been written on de Havilland aircraft that we are not even going to try and compete with what has already been done. We plan to capture the memories of ordinary working people many of whom came to Hatfield in search of a job in the industry. These same people formed the basis of the new town. We would like to collect pictures of work inside the factory. We also hope to detail some of the many building processes used in the industry that are now long gone. Manned flight has been with us for just over one hundred years, in that time processes have changed from timber string and fabric, all wooden aircraft, all metal aircraft, simple piston engines through to the most sophisticated engine like the Merlin that powered the Mosquito and on to jet engines. The de Havilland company was so innovative with its designs and processes but these revolutionary processes have changed so fast that many are already lost. We owe it to future generations to keep a record of how all these lost aircraft building processes worked.

With such a wealth of knowledge in the town, we want to search out people with a story to tell. It need not be a work of Shakespeare, just little pieces of what they did will help to build a

Letters

North Mymms, Hatfield

I have some photos of the interior of the Cranborne Rooms when in its hey day it held toy fairs there in the 80s. I always had a stall there.

I may also be able to help with some cinema photos.

I have recently come across some more information about the Lone Star Company from its early days which as far as I know has not been previously recorded. I am hoping to make a small history of this to bring along to the open meeting on July 12th.

Ron Kingdon

Wellington

Has anyone got hidden away any photos of the Old Fiddle and cottages in Roe Green Lane, Hatfield as it used to be called. Postage will be paid.

Mary Moore

*Facilities are available to
copy and return photos.*

Editor

much larger picture for posterity. No book is planned at this time We simply need to record, catalogue, and store this history. Many of our members will be able to tell us something. Please help or forward details of people with a story to tell.

Telephone Terry Pankhurst

Women in de Havilland 1949 - 1960

By Peggy Skeggs

At 16 years of age, on the 27^m July, 1949, proudly clutching my School Certificate, I had been successful in my interview to be a Film reader in the Instrument Laboratory. I was escorted to a rather tired looking building close to the airfield and was introduced to my two female colleagues, one of whom was amazingly my best friend. That afternoon we were allowed to join fellow workers lining the runway to see the first flight of the world's first jet airliner. This was so much more exciting than school.

I was to learn that the Comet had a large instrument panel in the cockpit and a mounted camera loaded with 35mm film photographed 8 frames per second during flight. The films were delivered to our Dark room and when processed were given to our team. We three girls sat side by side in a small darkened section where we loaded the film onto a projector which threw images of the instruments onto a screen. The pilots and flight observers would have taken the times when there had been problems on the flight and we would often have to read up to 20 or 30 instruments a frame during a critical period. These would include altimeters, air speed indicators, revolutions per minute, and we obviously had to be very accurate. The first girl would sit close to the screen and would read aloud, the second girl would write them down and when the large sheets were full, they would be passed to the third girl who would calibrate the readings using graphs provided by laboratory technicians. Instruments do not read the same at ground level as say at 30,000 ft due to the

change in pressure. The whole process was complex but we became amazingly quick and changed from reading to writing and then to calibrating during the day. If there had been a particular problem during the flight that caused concern, pilots would pop in to see the results of critical time frames, but then all of our sheets would be passed to the Flight Test Department for analysis.

Late in 1951 a flight observer asked us if we would like to join the crew to read instruments during flight. Of course we all agreed so we drew lots to see who would go first and I was ecstatic when my name was drawn. The next morning I was given a white flying suit which was rather large for me and also an unattractive helmet with earphones. I was escorted to the beautiful gleaming silver aircraft - G-ALVG. I was not nervous - just terribly excited. We had been given a flight on the Heron in the previous year which had been my first flight, but this was very different. I was shown to my seat - a plank of wood!!! The aircraft was a working laboratory, so only the crew had comfortable seats.

John Cunningham was the pilot, and through my head phones I heard him say "Gentlemen. We have a lady on board, so no bad language please" What a gentleman he was. Then with a tremendous roar we were rushing along the runway into a clear blue sky. I had previously been told that we would be testing the de-icing system and this would involve looking for the right conditions to ice up the wings. Eventually we were lucky and now when I received the signal I would read out in a loud clear

voice the outside temperature gauge.. No one had thought to tell me just what a stall would feel like and I thought my stomach had gone through my plank and hit the floor, but I managed to read the falling temperatures and fortunately for all of us the system worked beautifully. The flight was five hours long and at one point the pilot said that we were rather too close to the Iron Curtain for comfort. In the 50s this was a no-go area for planes over Russian air space, so we were obviously using their weather. In retrospect I suppose this whole experience was extremely dangerous but I had total faith in Captain John Cunningham and the Comet.

Unfortunately history was made following the devastating crashes caused by metal fatigue and the insurance premiums were so huge for flight test personnel that I never flew in her again. I suppose that I must have been one of the first females to fly in a jet airliner and although I worked on instrumentation on Herons, Doves, Vixens, Venoms and much later the Trident, the Comet will always have a place in my heart.

PAST PRESERVATION

The grade II listed buildings of the de Havilland administration block and canteen are being restored and refurbished for the new area headquarters of the Hertfordshire Constabulary. The area commander has said that they will be working with the community and people concerned with the history of the site to create a monument to the legacy of de Havilland.

Welwyn Hatfield Heritage Forum

The Welwyn Hatfield Heritage Forum was set up at the end of 2006 to promote, encourage and facilitate the Borough's heritage as and when opportunities arise. The Forum consists of representatives from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Hatfield Town Council, Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service, Friends of Welwyn Hatfield Museums, Welwyn Garden Society, Hertfordshire Library Service and Hatfield Local History Society.

Initiatives already discussed by the Forum have been -

1. Hatfield's Heritage Open Days 2007. How best to promote and advertise this event.
2. A proposed WW2 exhibition in 2009, to mark the 70years anniversary of the start of WW2. This exhibition will have local emphasis on the Borough's war effort including the Frythe, Jack Olding, Murphy Radio and de Havillands.
3. History of the A1 (Old North Road) in Hatfield. Brian Lawrence presented his idea of providing visual display boards around and along the A1 corridor. These boards would give brief snapshots of the history along the Old North Road. Old Hatfield in particular has a wealth of history that is being missed. Brian is looking for support and funding.

Initiatives such as these with the help of the Forum and other interested parties can only help to give the heritage of our Borough a higher profile and hopefully raise greater interest in our long history.

Chris Martindale

AN ESTATE WORKER

An extract from his life story by Frederick George Barnes

In May 1892 I advertised for a job and soon had three replies, two were unsatisfactory, the other came from Mr H Shillito, Clerk of Works at Hatfield House, the seat of the Marquis of Salisbury, so off I went to Hatfield in a hurry to have an interview which turned out most successful for I was there and then offered the post at thirty shillings per week and might consider myself engaged providing my credentials were satisfactory:-Said goodbye once more to home and started work at Hatfield on the 15th May 1892. Found lodgings at the Temperance Hotel at the start and later with Joe Byras a coachman to the Marquis.

Now tired of lodgings, I was determined to make a bold start in married life so on 19th December 1892 I took Lottie Rhind, my present most beloved dear wife to the altar in St Luke's Church Chelsea, where Canon Chapman joined us together for the remainder of our lives:-To Pangbourne we went for our Honeymoon, then back to Hatfield into a four roomed cottage in Fore Street, the only cottage to be had. It was certainly a bold start for I hadn't more than thirty pounds to my credit, but as long as we two were agreed nothing else mattered. Here on the 21 January 1894 arrived the great joy of our lives, a baby girl now Charlotte Susannah.

We soon had an opportunity to move into a better cottage, No. 9 Glebe Cottages, and here again on the 24th of September 1896 arrived a greater joy a baby boy now George Cyril, this coupled the pigeon pair as they say. Both were christened in St Etheldreda's Church Hatfield.

Mr Shillito proved a Tartar propper which made the going very difficult for me, one does not like to complain, but there is a limit to all things and when one has to work from six o' clock to five thirty and

then take the books home and do another three hours, before going to bed it was a bit too much for me, but when one has a dear good wife and two dear children it more than compensates for the extra one has to do.

In 1896 Mr Shillito passed away and I am left with sixty men in the building department and for twelve months I have the whole job to manage. A successor, Mr Marshall, to Mr Shillito is appointed in 1898, quite a gentleman, but unfortunately my work increased. My wage was now forty shillings per week and five and three pence was always deducted for rent. I always took an active part in all sports and gained many honours in connection with the Primrose League. I am now permitted to do private work in my own time to augment my wage and during the latter part of time at Hatfield, had several contracts in hand.

This meant working many nights and it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back, this is how I felt

One day Mr Marshall asked me if I knew of a young man who would come to go to Netherby Hall, Longtown, Cumberland, the seat of Sir Richard Graham, as a Clerk of Works, shall I do says I: it is no good to you, the salary is not enough says he, but I suggested the position would be better as I should be playing first fiddle instead of second and that perhaps would be more beneficial to me in the future: the job then is yours without the asking if you wish to accept, says he.

The salary was just about half the income I was making but the hours of work would be different.

After eight of the happiest years of my life at Hatfield I start for Netherby on the 15th June 1900, with delightful presents and best wishes of our many friends and our future abode was to be at Carwinly about four miles north of Longtown.

Forth Coming Events

We will be having stalls at the **Hilltop Festival** (High View, Bishops Rise) on **Saturday 16th June** and at the **Kaleidoscope Festival** (Stanborough Park) on **Saturday 14th July**. We hope to see you at one or both of these events.



**BARCLAYS BANK
HATFIELD BRANCH AT FORE STREET**

Heritage Open Days 2007 **6-9 September**

Heritage Open Days weekend is one of England's largest and most popular voluntary cultural events. It is a joint venture organised by local organisations and volunteers in partnership with the Civic Trust and English Heritage.

After a break we are again organizing the Heritage Open Days weekend in Hatfield. We hope to have several properties open during this weekend as well as guided walks around Hatfield Old Town and the Hilltop area. Hopefully this will show some of the diverse architecture of Hatfield. . Publicity will be coming out in August and there will be a full list of properties that will be open in our next Newsletter.

We hope our efforts in Hatfield are once again a success

The original branch was opened in 1877/78 by Sharples & Co., also known as the Hertfordshire Hitchin Bank. This Bank was a private partnership, and one of twenty banks that amalgamated in 1896 to form the original Barclays limited company. It is not known where the first Hatfield branch was situated. However, according to the schedule of deeds and premises register freehold premises were acquired in 1886 by Sharples and subsequently sold by Barclays in 1914. These are described as follows: 'situate on the south side of Fore Street to which street they have a frontage of 25 feet 6 inches, one room on the ground floor of which is occupied by Messrs. Sharples & Co'.

Hatfield was until 1922 a sub to Hertford. In 1921 Barclays purchased new premises in The

Broadway, which from 1939 was known as 30 Great North Road (or Way). This remained the main branch until 1968, when the business was transferred to the new Town Centre branch at 86, Town Centre. The old branch at Great North Road was then renamed Old Town and became a sub to Town Centre, and in 1972 the address was changed again to 18 Salisbury Square. Old Town was closed completely on 22 February 1986.

The photograph is of the Hatfield branch dated 1956. This must be the new premises purchased in 1921 and subsequently rebuilt or altered. However, the street name plate on the extreme right of picture is clearly Fore Street, presumably at the junction with Great North Road, and presumably on the north side of Fore Street.

MEETINGS

Thursday July 12 7.30 pm

Open meeting with displays etc.

Monday September 10 7 pm for 7.30

Martin Copping

THE CITY OF LONDON - its people buildings and history

Thursday October 11 2 pm for 2.30

Peter Clark - **HATFIELD TOWN COUNCIL**

Monday November 12 7 pm for 7.30

Tony Rook

I'VE COME ABOUT THE DRAINS

A new look at Roman architecture

December Open Christmas Meeting