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Letters

THE FIRST TOWN COUNCIL

Peter C. Clark

Broseley, Shropshire

Since the publication of the September 2007 Newsletter containing the article 'Ladies Working at de Havilland Aircraft Company During World War II I have received a number of phone calls and letters from people who read the paper and have asked me if the Pauline Gower referred to is any relation to me. Unfortunately I cannot claim to have such a fine woman as a member of my family but I can say that my Mother knew all about the lady and I was named in her memory.

I was told from an early age that Pauline Gower was famous for flying aircraft but that she was not quite as well known as Amy Johnson. Although this story was always in the back of my memory I never had any way of finding out more about my namesake. About 4 years ago, browsing in a second-hand book shop, I picked up a book entitled 'A Girdle Round the Earth' - Women Travellers and Adventurers by Maria Aitken. A whole chapter is devoted to Aviatresses and a page to Pauline Gower.

Yours very sincerely,

Pauline Hannigan (nee Gower)

On 4 December 1894 at 6 p.m., a meeting was held to elect a Council for the Parish of Hatfield, as in every other parish in England and Wales. This was as a result of the passing on 5 March that year of the Local Government Act 1894.

In his last speech in Parliament W E Gladstone warned the Lords against thwarting the elected Commons, referring to the "many men of virtue, many men of talent¹ in that "other place". One of those was the Third Marquess of Salisbury who, two years earlier, had made the claim that "the rural population would be more amused by a circus or something of that kind than by having village councils."

About three hundred and fifty parochial electors attended that meeting on Tuesday, 4 December 1894. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Daniell was unanimously elected Chairman of the meeting. He had been Chief Constable of Hertfordshire since 1880 and continued until his retirement in 1911, aged seventy two. At the time the County Police Headquarters was in Hatfield, having relocated from Hertford some ten years earlier and Colonel Daniell himself lived in the town at Lothair Villas.

The Chairman called for nominations and twenty six candidates contested the fifteen seats. When the result was declared one of the defeated candidates, Ezekiel Elliott of Park Street, demanded a Poll. This was held on Monday 17 December and only two out of the original fif-

teen failed to be elected. Elliott was not elected either. This procedure of a vote by a show of hands at a Parish Meeting, followed by a Poll only if requested at the meeting, continued through until the elections in 1946. Polls only took place in 1894 and 1904.

The first meeting of the new Parish Council took place on Monday 31 December 1894 at the Hall, Hatfield and John Lloyd and Lt Colonel Henry Daniell were proposed for the position of Chairman. A vote took place and John Lloyd was elected as the first Chairman having gained a clear majority of nine votes to five. William Selby Church was elected Vice-Chairman, Mr W Cosens of London & Country Bank, Hertford was appointed Treasurer and Manasseh Johnson was formally appointed as Clerk "but the settlement of the additional salary he should receive for his new duties was postponed until a future meeting."

Other items on the Agenda included the Returning Officer's account for the Council's cost of the Poll which was £31/16/6d and the Assistant Overseer produced an account for expenses of the Parish Meeting amounting to £12/4/7d. It was also agreed that in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Local Government Act 1894 the Council Meetings would be open to the Public and Press and "that the latter have full freedom of report"....."except when the Council choose to go into Camera".

FLOOD DAMAGE IN HATFIELD 1878

The storm of Sunday last has committed fearful damage at Hatfield.

The rain began to fall at about 12.30 and the lower part of the street opposite Mr. Pryor's brewery was flooded. When service at Church was over, the people had to be carried across in vehicles. Reed Pond at the back of the Villas, overflowed and filled the cottages near, the lower rooms being several feet deep in water. Howe Dell also sent an immense quantity of water into the town, and the flood gradually increased until at 3.30 pm the water burst from the street into Mr. Pryor's grounds and thence forced its way into the house. The Drawing Room and the Dining Room were instantly five feet deep in water. The damage is frightful. New and valuable furniture quite spoilt, a fine collection of pictures lost, and a splendid set Dresden china that cost nearly £1,000 washed away, except a clock.

The water rushed on, filling the other rooms, kitchens etc. On the casement storey, new cellars were choked full of water instantly, also the store room but the water drained off these quickly and it fared better than the rest of the premises.

At the rear of the house is a malting with tun room below, here a number of barrels of beer were stored; but the water made a clean breach through the end of the building carrying the brickwork several yards into Mr. Stone's back premises and lifting up a privy entire and carrying it several yards. The force of water also floated several barrels of

beer, many were found in Mr. Stone's parlour and some were floated down to the Hertford Road.

In Park Street the destruction is awful. The water forced a hole through Mr. Pryor's wall in the front premises into Park Street and houses were 3 to 5 feet deep in water. Mr. Hankin's shop is very much damaged: the water actually burst up the floor from below. Mr. Stone's premises are almost a wreck: the floor is sludge, the floor spoilt and in the lower rooms were found on Monday morning some barrels of Mr. Pryor's beer as before stated. Mr. Gregory, grocer, is also a severe sufferer from damage done to his stock in trade and all the dwellers in Park Street are more or less injured by the water. A pony is killed, also some pigs belonging to Mr. Proctor. The road in Park Street is played up by the torrent and all that part of the town was a sad scene of desolation and distress yesterday. A great many persons visited the scene.

The above is from Tuesday's Guardian. We have more particulars to add. The sad catastrophe was caused by the immense quantity of water that came from Mill pond in addition to the rain fall that flooded the streets. This received the water from Howe Dell, a large tract of some acres in extent near the Rectory which acts as a reservoir for the water from the surrounding districts. Here are several swallow holes down which the water normally escapes and reappears on the surface after some miles of subterraneous flow. It is an old tradi-

tion that a duck was once put down one of these holes and came up not far from Ware. On Sunday the swallow holes could not take the water and it came into Mill Pond which was also fed by the stream from North Mimms. These supplies and the heavy rains caused the pond to overflow and about three o'clock it burst over the banks with tremendous force. Close by are the Villas and the water rushed through the back gardens into the houses of Mr. Hankin, Mr. Cowle, Mr. Bird and Mr. Proctor. Several feet deep in each thence it went into the road in front and on to Mr. Sheehan's premises. He is a heavy sufferer as are the dwellers in the barracks.

Mr. Jas. Burgess had £200 worth of bark on his premises. Some of it has floated away and much more is spoilt. Here in the rear was a valuable pony belonging to Mr. Smith: it was got out of the stable and into the road, but the water was several feet deep and it got to the opposite fence and put its head and shoulders over but its feet remained hanging on the top of the fence and the poor thing was drowned head downwards.

Mr. Lambert's shop, Pond Hill the water was 5½ feet deep and the children had to be taken out of the upper windows. Mr. Burgess, furniture and fancy dealer is opposite and his stock in trade is very much injured. Mr. Bunker, builder, had the water 4 feet deep in his house and 5½ feet deep in the yard and the loss of timber and other goods floated away. The Post Office suffers

SCHOOL DAYS

by Tony Giblenn

severely, it is said that about £40 or £50 worth of stamps are lost or injured or destroyed. The water was in the public library two feet deep and hundreds of volumes are either destroyed or irretrievably damaged. Salisbury Square has suffered severely.

It can readily be imagined how great was the force of water when the Mill Pond banks gave way. The valley was flooded from rain alone before one o'clock, the rain kept falling and when the torrent of water came at 3.00 pm it swept like a cataract into Mr. Pryor's front garden and through the house as before described. It bored a hole through the ivy wall into the kitchen of Mr. Gregory, china dealer: and from Mr. Pryor's wine vaults it broke down a partition wall and filled Mr. Gregory's vaults and cellars, forcing its way up and bursting the floor of Mr. Hankin's shop. The rooms of these two houses were all deluged and all the houses on the west side of Park Street, several of the east side suffered also but not so much, 18 inches to 2 feet being the extent of the flooding in the living rooms, but some of the cellars were flooded; at the Eight Bells the water was blocked out. Mrs. Bilton's house next to Mr. Stone's was seriously damaged, the water came rushing there after tearing through the end of the malt kiln, dashed the back room outer wall quite away and tore out the front window. Mrs. and Miss Bilton had to run upstairs in a hurry to save their lives, they didn't have a bit of food. Just here in the street sewers were blown off. Mr. Walby's shop and Mr. Hall's yard were inundated. Mr. Sherriff lost some fowls, a pig and a goat. Mr. Gre-

gory, grocer, is a very heavy loser. The water was 5 feet deep in his shop and warehouses.

The Jacob's Well Inn cellar was flooded and the water was 3 feet deep in Mr. Dunham, the builder's yard and 2½ feet deep in the front street and in the field beyond the water threw down several yards of a brick wall and made a course through Mr. Drage's meadow and down to the Hertford Road, this was the way the full barrel of ale floated. Two feet of gravel was washed into the road in front. 14 hives of bees were drowned in Mr. Gregory's garden and 60 quarters of malt were floated into his premises when the malting wall gave way.

On Sunday afternoon and evening Mr. Dagg very kindly lent a boat to supply provisions to those who had had to take refuge in their bedrooms. The tradesmen of the town all exerted themselves very much helping those who required assistance. The torrent began to abate about eight o'clock on Sunday evening, Park Street having been like a rushing river for six hours.

On Monday morning the parish engine and the Hatfield House engines were busy all day emptying the cellars of the flood water. Pond Hill preserved a very dismal sight and Park Street was complete desolation.

There ought to be an open water course in the valley to provide for such an emergency. There is a course we are told, but Mr. Pryor's house was built over it and the premises acted as a dam.

We hear the house has been flooded once before.

EXTRACT FROM THE HERTS. GUARDIAN,
SATURDAY JULY 6TH 1878. Found in the local
history archives of Mill Green Museum

It is said "a first love is never forgotten." This was certainly true for me, when at 5 years of age I encountered Miss Winifred Butterfield, who lived at No.7 Glebeland (still standing today). I remember her as a tubby person, and no more than five foot in height. I soon discovered she was a jolly, and kind lady, in fact she was *the salt of the earth*, actually enjoying her vocation 100 %.

Countess Anne, so our elderly historians tell us, was a Charity School founded in 1730 situated just inside Hatfield Park. Much later being moved to Church Street about 1870, into a building that was erected as a place of worship, whilst the Parish Church underwent restoration. Each day at school after assemble, massive floor to ceiling screens would be pulled closed to provide four separate classrooms, and when war was declared the cloakrooms were used as air raid shelters after being reinforced with great wide beams on wooden supports, and of course gas masks were carried at all times. On certain days after school we would walk home by crossing through the church yard into the park entrance at the top of Fore Street and play on the WW1 tank, before leaving by the main gate. In later years the tank was removed (to Bovington I think). On other days we would make a detour from school down Church Lane to the sweet factory on the Great North Road, and buy a penny worth of broken munch. The factory was once the Old London Road School, later to be used by the K.C.V Precision Tool Company - which was subsequently demolished and replaced by one of Gray's garages and is now Moorlands Cars.

My next school journey was a shorter one, just round the corner from where I lived past The Rising

Holocaust Memorial Day 27 Jan 2008

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Sun public house along School Lane, to where St Audreys stood just behind the old police station. The head master Mr. B. H. Oliver was a tough disciplinarian, but greatly mellowed with retirement becoming a guide in Hatfield House.

To help the war effort and keep the home fires burning so to speak, residents of Hatfield were allowed to take old prams and hand trucks into the park to collect fallen wood to burn. For some years during the war the house was utilized as a hospital, as was Bush Hall along the Hertford Road.

Then catastrophe. Early on the morning October 10th 1944 a V1 flying bomb landed between the school and the police station severely damaging houses; one of the casualties was our class mate David Willson who lost his sight. New accommodation had to be found. Some classes were housed in the Petty Sessional Court House, and some in the Public Hall, where there were 4 classes of about 130 to 140 children in close proximity. Having a stage in the hall was an asset; the last period of the week each individual class presented an entertainment, plays and sketches sometimes written by ourselves. A new school was built on the old site and schooling returned to normality in 1946, and my journey to school was ended.

About 2 weeks ago I had a look at the tree and plaque in the area between Queensway and Link Drive carpark.

I wet the wording and it showed up better. I took a magnifying glass and made the following out:

This tree was planted on 27th January 2001 by Councillor Linda Mendez, Chairman of Welwyn Hatfield District Council and Councillor Jeanne Wenham, Chairman of Hatfield Town Council to commemorate the first UK Holocaust Memorial Day.

Heather Richardson

Dates for your Diary

Monday 10 March 7.30

The History of Potters Bar until 1900

Brian Warren,
President and Archivist
of the Potters Bar & District Local History Society

Thursday 10 April 2.30

An Evacuee in Hatfield During WW2

Terry Lenihan

Monday 12 May 7.30

AGM followed by

The National Trust's Industrial Heritage

Ronald Smith
An experienced speaker for the National Trust

Thursday 10 July 2.30

Open Meeting

Theme to be announced

All above meetings to be held in

**FRIENDSHIP HOUSE
WELLFIELD CLOSE**

Saturday 19 July

KALEIDOSCOPE

At Stanborough Park, Welwyn Garden City