

Hatfield This Century

Hatfield people explore their history from 1900

NEWSLETTER SPRING 1992

We are sorry about missing the winter newsletter but all activity has been directed to two projects, namely gathering funds for the New Town booklet and launching the Hatfield Tapestry.

However plans have been outlined by Welwyn Hatfield District Council to avoid charge-capping for the 1992/93 financial year. It is envisaged that the Roman Baths may be closed, the archaeological post at Mill Green be lost and hours of opening of the Museum curtailed. Please let WHDC know your feelings about these plans!

There is now more than £1200 in our subscription list for the booklet, due to a very generous donation by Dame Barbara Cartland. Many thanks to Lynn Smith for all her work in replying to subscribers. There has been a good response from members of the public, but a relatively poor response from organisations and businesses situated in Hatfield Town Centre. Sue Kirby will now try to get it printed in time for Hat'Fest 92

The committee have decided to offer prizes for designs and ideas for the Hatfield Tapestry and not to seek sponsorship for this particular activity as the tapestry will require a large sponsorship when it comes to the design and manufacturing of the tapestry itself. It will represent the last 150 years of Hatfield's history, that is, from just before the railway came to Hatfield, We have been fortunate in having a panel of Henry Gray, Robin Harcourt Williams and Sue Kirby to ensure that historical errors do not enter the tapestry. A manufacturing quality control panel is being sought to maintain a high uniform quality of work. All associations in and around Hatfield are being approached for their participation in a tapestry by the people for the people. There is a special under 18's competition for schools and young people.

The Group gave two talks on Wednesday, 11th March at Roe Hill Hall at 2.30 & 7.30pm to 50 people and to outline our competition and show slides of some of the events to be shown on the tapestry. Brief details of the history and development of the tapestry concept are given overleaf format are given overleaf.

Welwyn Hatfield District Council's Community Grant Panel has voted us enough money to purchase a high quality tape recorder and battery pack to improve the quality of Stella Cunningham's oral history recordings. The recorder will live at Mill Green.

Reg Coleman in conjunction with Dennis Jenner has mounted a De Havilland display at Birchwood Recreation Hall at the invitation of the Town Council, We hope to pick up more information on the social history of De Havillands from this display.

Dame Barbara has lent Audrey Chapman some of her papers relating to Camfield Place and we are seeking someone to work on them. Offers to Sue.

Sue Kirby has arranged a demonstration of straw-plaiting at Mill Green Museum on Sunday, the 24th of May by Veronica Maine who has been working with Luton Museum in recreating the plaits from the 19th century. During Hat'Fest week, Marion Nicholls - the social historian at Luton Museum -will talk about straw plaiting and its social context.

Last but not least, the conserved Kelly's have finally arrived at both Hatfield and St Albans, so relevant data should soon be available.

OUTLINE OF THE HATFIELD TAPESTRY STORY

This whole idea started out when the committee realised the clarity of the 1910 Inland Revenue map of New Town with its carefully colour-washed areas to show who owned and occupied property. The original builders of the settlement must have purchased blocks of land, separated by so-called rights of way in some cases. This purchasing of land blocks then shows a relatively neat pattern of building and makes the 1910 plan extremely neat and tidy. It was suggested that a patchwork should be made of the 1910 map, and since it involved blocks of land, it was possible to envisage differing groups of people producing their own block.

Such a patchwork needs to be large and requires to be mounted on a large wall, say the committee room of Hatfield Town Council at Kennelwood House. Unfortunately, not many members of the public would be able to view it, and the problem of moving it around to schools, etc. would be difficult.

However, in discussions with Hatfield Town Council, it was found that the original Hatfield Parish Council was established in 1894, so that the present Hatfield Town Council wanted to celebrate its 100 years of existence. To include this 100 years with New Town would have meant that the patchwork would have been very large and unlikely to fit into the committee room or similar facility.

By this time, the Quaker Tapestry had been seen at St Albans Abbey, and triggered ideas of having a series of panels to tell Hatfield's history including New Town. The big advantage of a panel format is that mini-exhibitions can be mounted, in addition, the format allows extra panels to be added with time as well as extra panels inserted to portray particular aspects of Hatfield's history which were not planned at the beginning. A typical mini-exhibition could be De Havillands and its aircraft. Schools could have an exhibition to match whatever they are studying as part of the local history section of the National Curriculum, particularly for the 7 to 11 year olds. The Quaker Tapestry is on show at Watford Museum for most of this month (March).

As a start, the Group is aiming to cover the last 150 years, that is, covering the period from just before the building of New Town and the arrival of the railway in Hatfield. When this period is looked at, there have been a number of large changes to the roads and buildings in Hatfield. The same period also covers a very important national and local role for the Cecil family. De Havillands arrival in 1930 and the designation of Hatfield as a New Town in 1948 further hastened changes in Hatfield. The construction of the A1M tunnel and the Galleria complex adds recent items to record.