

Hatfield This Century

Hatfield people explore their history from 1900

No. 9

Newsletter

April 1993

Editor:

Your committee and editor were grateful for the letters received following the last Newsletter. Such response confirms the interest of members in the objects of the association and the willingness to impart knowledge and memories of the past and to have them recorded for future generations.

The members' evening held on the 17th February attracted about 24 members who readily took part in recalling the various views of Hatfield past which Sue Kirby had compiled. Several 'grey' areas were identified and personal reminiscences of local premises and inhabitants contributed to a most pleasant evening. Much of the information dispensed could well be included in the outcome of the various projects which members are working on. May we have more such evenings please.

The Newtown booklet is selling quite well and generating considerable interest. George Bennett, who is doing sterling work in the dispersion of the book, tells us that he is not the baker's lad depicted in the photograph. That has been identified as Billy Hulkes - no relation to the baker.

Oral history. Joan Coleman has agreed to take over the co-ordination of the oral history. Sue Kirby can arrange tuition for prospective interviewers at any convenient time. What an interesting presentation this could be one evening.

The de Havilland exhibition closed with a flourish with a visit from Lord Salisbury and civic dignitaries. Unfortunately the proposed TV presentation did not materialise due to the breakdown of cameras.

For those people researching their family history the National census records from 1841 to 1891 will be installed in the IBM computer kindly donated by Mitsubishi. Later the Kelly's Directory information from 1900 to 1966 will be included, then the Inland Revenue returns for 1910. The 1910 I.R. maps at the Hertford Record Office have been camcordered by Eric Sherrard so that members may now study these at home - probably more interesting than some current TV programmes! Eric is continuing to record the 100 page book that describes the numbered plots of land, buildings, tenants and owners referred to in the maps.

Many thanks to the members who responded to the queries in the last newsletter by phone and post. I do not have any feedback from the members' projects but if you have responded to those in person, thank you.

It has been established that the Cole Green station was located by the Cowper Arms and is still visible as part of the countryside walk to Hertford. A map, kindly loaned, shows the route of the railway heading north from Hatfield to where Welwyn Garden City station was eventually built to circumvent the Salisbury estate, then cross country - still evident in WGC - through Birchall and Holwell Hyde, under the Hertford road, now A414, (remember the hump bridge?) by the now domestic waste site to Cole Green, across the fields to join the main Enfield line at Hertingfordbury in to Hertford North station, then looping back through Hartham Common to Hertford East.

The Lemsford Road Halt on the St. Albans line is well remembered. Constructed during the second world war it supplemented the bus routes to enable workers to get to de Havillands, a short walk away. Evidence is still there in Lemsford Road by the junction with Fiddle Bridge Lane. Photographs of the halt are included in the de Havilland exhibition.

Dennis Jenner tells us that he served with the Royal Tank Regiment from 1940 to 1946 and kindly sent a copy from the regimental history detailing the tank trials in Hatfield Park in 1916. These were over a circuit designed to replicate the trench warfare of the Western Front and included trenches and barbed wire. The course was built on the golf course and putting green and the tank, called Big Willie (built by Messrs. Foster of Lincoln), successfully completed the trial with a crew of eight, four of whom were needed to steer it! As a result the Mark 1 tanks were ordered, males with two six pounder guns and females with machine guns. The original tank was called "Mother" because she founded the tank family - though technically she was a male with 6 pounder guns. In 1919 one of these tanks was presented to Lord Salisbury in acknowledgement of the fact that he made his land available for the trials. It was positioned just beyond the viaduct where it was used as a play centre by many Hatfield children. In the 1970's it was donated to the Bovington Tank Museum where it holds pride of place having been renovated for display.

Brian Lawrence writes that the school bell was originally hung at the London Road National School in 1850. It was moved to St. Audrey's School in School Lane about 1935 and recovered from the debris after the bombing in 1946. When St. Audrey's was transferred to Travellers Lane the bell went with it. Was it used to call pupils to classes in later days?

The first approach to Hatfield from London on the Barnet by-pass, A505, was signified by the glorious flowers of Ryder's Seed Trial Ground at the junction with the North Orbital Road, now the exit road from the A1(M). Samuel Ryder, who owned these grounds, carried on his well known seed business in Holywell Hill, St. Albans. He was a keen golfer and captain of Verulam Golf Club and presented the trophy which bears his name. Was there also a family connection with the Miss Joan Ryder who laid the foundation stone for the Christ Church Congregational building in St. Albans Road?

Leonard Stevens of Norwich recalls Jack Oldings as a training depot for the Royal Engineers and the occasion when, as manager of the Chalk pit at Bedwell Park Ssendon, he obtained the consent of the officer in charge for the trainees to work the pit with a D8 Caterpillar bulldozer and a D6 tractor with scraper attachment.

Gladys Brown tells us that she has archive material from the earlier WEA group passed on by Mrs. Barbara Hutton. This is available to researchers.

Another member of that WEA group was Peter Kingsford who was Registrar and Head of Social Studies at the Technical College (now the University) from 1952 to 1973. Peter has kindly offered to give an account of the early days of the college I am sure this will be followed up.

More information required.

When was the landmark erected at Jack Oldings Corner? Was it before they took on the Caterpillar Tractor franchise?

When did Duck Lane become Park Street, or was it only part of Park Street?

I recently heard of Lord Essendon as a sponsor of the Herts Aero Club. Further information would be of interest.

Has anyone histories of Hatfield clubs or associations worthy of recall?

It is provisionally planned to hold the AGM on 25 May. This will be the subject of a separate notice.

Items for inclusion in future newsletters will be gratefully received.

F.C.