

Hatfield This Century

Hatfield people explore their history from 1900

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The AGM was held on 25th May when Eric Sherrard relinquished his appointment as chairman and his position on the committee having completed his 3 year term of office. Thanks were expressed for his valuable service. We are sure that Eric's support and encouragement will still be an essential part of the association.

Also retiring from the committee were Lynn Smith and Shirley Knapp to whom thanks were expressed for their work.

To fill the three vacancies Brian Lawrence, John Pennington and Ron White were elected on to the committee.

Subsequently the committee elected Terry Pankhurst as chairman but the position of secretary awaits resolution.

At the AGM Peter Kingsford gave an account of the early days of the University of Hertfordshire when it was the Polytechnic.

In spite of the lack of advertising by the Town Council about 40 people attended the Hat Fest Pot-Pourri of local history presented by members at roe Green Pavillion.

Eric Sherrard's efforts to protect the BAe buildings from being demolished bore fruit when a preservation order was granted by the Department of National Heritage because of their historic interest and special architectural importance. The main interest was with the office block and gatehouse but the managers and staff messes were also included in the listing as Grade II buildings, this will ensure that any proposal to demolish or alter the buildings will be properly considered by means of the listed buildings procedure. It is still hoped that the de Havilland Museum may be housed here and representations to this effect are ongoing. Details of the construction of these buildings as included in the inspector's report have been obtained by Eric and are available to anyone interested.

John Gray has corrected the comment on the baker's boy on the cover of the Newtown booklet. He is in fact Henry Hulks (1899-1990), captioned in John's book "Football in Hatfield Pre-1940", as a member of Hatfield United team in the early 1920s and nicknamed "Tricky". Henry became a railway engine driver until his retirement when he became an usher at Hatfield Court.

Although unpublished John Gray's book, together with his treatise on cricket in Hatfield is available on loan from Hatfield Library. A reprint of "Football" is in preparation while it is hoped that a press release of "Cricket" will be an occasion to bring together some of the old players.

Another correction - the Barnet by pass was the A555, not the A505 as printed in the last Newsletter.

Leonard Stevens tells us that Jack Olding had a business in Gt. Portland Street, London, probably in the car trade before coming to Hatfield

in which Tom Walls, the film star, and others were involved. Fred Adams joined the company in November 1939 and tells us that the official opening of the business had taken place on 1st June of that year.

Letter from Brian Lawrence "During my recent visits to the County Record Office I have managed to extract certain information from the prospectus for the sale of the Hatfield Brewery in 1920 concerning not only the brewery premises but also the Prior Reed pubs in Hatfield and other properties owned by the company in old Hatfield at that time. The information obtained gives details of the individual properties, the terms of the leases and the names of the leaseholders. I have recorded the details that I have gathered on my PC and would be happy to share the information with any members who may find it relevant to specific projects in which they are involved.

I thought you may care to bring this to the attention of members and suggest that they contact me if they so wish."

The following article written by Mr. J. Waters of Waters Garage in 1970 has been provided by Phillip Porter:

Around 1930 the By-Pass was constructed to ease the volume of traffic on the old A1 road through Hatfield. The founders of our present company, George and Fred Waters, hired to the road contractors three tipper lorries. All were chain driven, a Fiat (Italian), a Saurer (Swiss), a Hallford (built by Hall & Co. of Dartford). The tipping gears were all hand operated screw drive. Were hydraulics invented then? Gravel was supplied by steam driven lorries from the Herts Gravel Co. pits at Welwyn Garden City, now occupied by the Gosling Stadium and Police Headquarters.

At the same time, as the road construction, on the site now occupied by the Stonehouse, Waters built the first petrol filling station on the new road. Soon afterwards a cafe, followed by a licensed restaurant were built. This, of course, led to a demand for a hotel so the filling station was transferred to its present site. (The original tanks, empty we hope, are still in front of the Stonehouse). About this time, George Waters in conjunction with Tom Oakley, the demolition contractors from Luton, bought for demolition, a disused brewery at Hoddesdon, a mansion at Putney and Knutsford prison (near Manchester). Various objects from Hoddesdon, Putney and Knutsford were used in building the Stonehouse.

The front door and porch came from Putney together with a plaque fitted adjacent to the Hotel entrance. The plaque reads "Come when you mind, a welcome find." True story: the wife of the owner of the Putney mansion left him - he had the plaque made and erected outside his front entrance in the hope she would return. She never came back! From Knutsford prison came the Stonehouse clock complete with bell used when some poor devil was hanged! The original clock was single faced - it was converted here. The weather vane and scroll work was also designed and constructed in our works.

Firstly, at Hoddesdon George Steele and "Nanna" Tyler helped build a new cinema. Afterwards the stone sets from the Hoddesdon brewery yards and roads were used to build the Stonehouse Hotel. These stone sets were transported by the same chain driven Saurer and a horse and cart. The driver of the latter would more often than not, lead the horse rather than ride on top - he just liked walking. At this time this driver was courting a girl living in Enfield. Twice a week he walked to Enfield and back to see her - twelve miles each way!

J.W.