

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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CROWDS FLOCK TO HATFIELD EXHIBITION

Hatfield's largest ever exhibition of historic photos was held in the Old Riding School, Hatfield House, in June. Many different subjects were included such as the Old Town; buildings and shops; Hatfield's brewery; football and other sports; pop music. Several organisations contributed to the exhibition - the University's display boards told of its 60 years of history; Lemsford LHS were there; and the Smallford Railway group brought along their display of the old branch line, plus a model of the station made by Alistair Cameron.



View of the exhibition from the first floor

Our own society produced displays about Hatfield during the wars, plus shops and businesses of the past. Heather Richardson, Jean Cross, and Jane Teather gave up their Sunday to 'man' the HLHS book stall.

One of the most popular aspects of the day was the opportunity to try beer from Hatfield's Pryor Reid brewery, which closed in 1920 (see issues 91 & 93). A dark mild, and a light bitter named 'Old Town', were specially re-created by brewer Nick Zivcovic, using original Pryor Reid recipes. This gave attendees a chance to sample what beer tasted like a century ago. Also on display were paintings by local artists and a series of children's books and music about Hatfield characters called Hobtails.



The event was part of a fundraising festival weekend for St. Etheldreda's Church. As part of the event, visitors had the opportunity to travel by horse and carriage to the Queen's Oak, accompanied by Lord Burghley (played by Gary Fisher), where they could see the young Princess receive the news that she was to become Queen. Pictured here are Lord Salisbury and Town Mayor Linda Mendez with Lord Burghley, and Princess Elizabeth with her ladies-in-waiting, all re-enacted brilliantly by members of the Hatfield Air Cadets.

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Chairman: **Mrs Chris Martindale**



RIFLEMAN HARRY EWINGTON: THE GREAT WAR AND HIS LIFE IN HATFIELD

The editors were contacted by Christine Rhodes and her mother Rosemary Marshall (nee Ewington), about Rosemary's father Harry Ewington. They sent us the fascinating story of Harry's WW1 active service and his life in Hatfield, along with many pictures, which formed one of the displays at the Hatfield Exhibition. The following is an abridged version of a talk which Rosemary has previously given about her father:

"Harry was born in Hatfield in 1886, one of 6 children. He went to school with his elder brother Alfred, leaving at the age of 13, in 1899, to become a garden boy for two spinster sisters with a large garden. From his early years he was a choirboy with Alfred at St Luke's Anglican Church in Hatfield, attending two Sunday services each week.

At some point he left the gardening job and entered the retail trade, as a draper's assistant in Fore Street. Harry settled on a career in the retail trade, and moved to a family run grocer's shop called Tingey's. His duties included delivering groceries, and later furniture, by pony and trap to customers in Hatfield and the surrounding villages and hamlets. At this time the Tingey family also sold ironmongery, china and glass, and ran a post office in Hatfield.



Newlyweds: Harry and Molly
in November 1915

In Dec 1915, aged 27yrs, Harry was newly married to my mother Edith, whom he always affectionately called Molly. He was a religious man who now regularly attended St Etheldreda's Church. It was at this time that he joined the Army Reserve.

In May of 1916, Harry was drafted full time into the Herts and Beds Regiment as a Private. He was sent to Ampthill in Bedfordshire for his basic military training.

Our family is fortunate in having over 200 handwritten letters and cards, sent from Harry to Molly during his army service, together with other mementos such as his pocket diary, discharge papers, medals etc.

The first of these letters were sent from Ampthill, where basic training for the ordinary soldier was exhausting. They were woken at 5am, and had physical training until 6pm. My father was a hardworking but gentle man, and this new military life must have come as a considerable shock. He noted that some of the officers were "unpleasant", and some food was already in short supply - a taste of things to come. Molly would send him home

made cake, butter, and other items to supplement the army diet. He was able to go home for occasional weekend leave when not on guard duty.

In August 1916 his battalion was moved to Felixstowe ready for embarkation to France. On 13th Sept Harry wrote a post card to Molly. He was sitting on his pack at Folkestone Harbour waiting to embark for France. He said that he was with his friends and was OK. I wonder what his thoughts truly might have been on that day....

Shortly after arriving in France, he was transferred to B Company, 10th Battalion, the Rifle Brigade.

As the battalion tried to push forward, Harry was now getting used to life in the trenches. Walking was very difficult through shell holes and thick mud. Falling into a muddy shell

hole could be a fatal mistake. Frequent artillery bombardments by the enemy took their toll, but Harry told Molly that his *"nerves were better than some other fellows that he had seen"*. Thinking of Molly, and their cottage in Hatfield helped to keep his spirits up.



Harry during his active service with 10th Battalion

Whilst it is difficult to know his whereabouts from the letters, because the soldiers were warned that giving away their location was a treasonable offence, we are lucky enough to have Harry's pocket diary for 1917, which gives the names of the towns and villages that they were near.

The early part of 1917 was spent in the trenches on the Somme, in villages near Albert, Northern France, making slow gains, suffering heavy shellfire, and being cold, wet and hungry for much of the time.

During rest and re-couperation periods they were sometimes able to walk to a nearby village where they would buy small gifts, or have photos taken, to send home. Our photo shows my father looking shockingly gaunt and thin after 9 months of active service.

In quieter times Harry picked flowers from the French countryside, and put them in his letters to Molly. The pressed flowers are still in the envelopes that we have.

Some of Harry's 1917 diary entries:

31st March - Shellfire. Advanced 1 mile

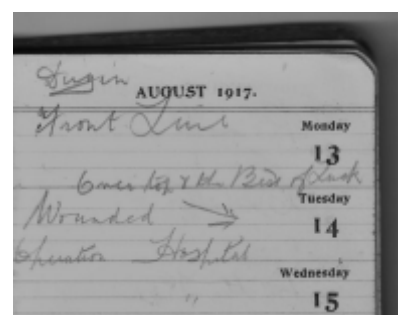
19th May - Front line. Saw aeroplane fall in flames. Believe to be British.

21st May - Front line. Arrived 2.30am. Left 7.30am. Havrincourt set on fire with our artillery

29th May - Moved back 3 miles. In dugouts

24th June - Received parcel. Church Parade

11th July - Recreational sports (the 3rd Battle of Ypres started today)



Harry's diary entry on August 14th: "Over the top and the best of luck"

In the middle of July 1917, after some additional "manoeuvres", his battalion was moved north from France across the border into the Ypres area of southern Belgium to support the ongoing 3rd Battle of Ypres.

I have studied the Rifle Brigade history book, and it confirms that on the 12th August his battalion was once again moved to the front line near the Steenbeek River at Ypres.

On the 14th August at 4am, a major attack was launched across the river.

My father wrote in his diary *"Over the Top and Best of Luck"*. He was badly wounded in the abdomen by rifle or machine gun fire, and shrapnel. He crawled back to a first aid station, and from here was evacuated back down the line to a field hospital. A week after his injury my father was evacuated by train to Rouen, in northern France, where he remained for a month because of the severity of his wounds. He was not expected to make a full recovery. My mother Molly received a card saying only "wounded and in hospital". For another 2 weeks she was unable to find out the extent of his injuries, causing great anxiety.

In late September 1917 he finally boarded a boat at Le Havre for Blighty. This was a huge relief for both of my parents.

In early 1918 Harry, having recovered from his injury sufficiently to begin work, returned to his job at Tingey's grocery store in Hatfield. The grocery business was struggling to overcome food shortages, which continued for some time after the end of the war on 11th November 1918.



Harry (right) with colleagues at the old Tingey's store

By 1919 Tingey's business was growing, and the 2 Tingey brothers decided to separate the grocery and furniture business into 2 shops. In 1920 Harry was promoted to manager of the new furniture store. They held a Grand Opening on 20th September, with afternoon tea served to customers. Harry's new job came with a large house and garden attached to the substantial shop building. Harry and Molly lived there for more than 40 years."



Poster for the Grand opening of the new store in 1920

Rosemary Ewington wrote a lovely letter to the editors about the display at the Hatfield exhibition, saying that she and her daughter Christine enjoyed meeting members of HLHS, and to thank all those who helped on the day. She was introduced to Lord Salisbury, and it seems that she knew his Great Great Grandfather, which made her feel rather old!

Reg Coleman



Sadly one of our founder members and long time committee member, Reg Coleman, passed away on Sunday 31st July. Reg was born in Fulham, London in 1928. His family often visited relatives living at Woodhall Farm Cottages. In 1940 due to air raids in London the family moved permanently to Hatfield, living at 6, Chapman Terrace, Old Hatfield. Reg went to school at St Audrey's and in 1942 started work at de Havilland. He was a member of the de Havilland Boys Club and in the early 1950's joined the Hatfield 20-35 Club where he met his wife Joan. He also became Chairman of the Camera

Club. Photography was a passion of his along with his love of Hatfield's history, especially its aviation history. Living most of his married life in Birchwood, Reg recently moved to Ashley Court.

Reg has always been one of our keenest supporters being involved in all aspects of HLHS work since 1991. He was an enthusiastic committee member, at one time being its Chairman. His knowledge and hard work will be greatly missed by all of us.



The de Havilland Boys Club joined with the St Alban's 'Pioneer' Mixed Youth Club for camping holidays. Here is one of Reg's photos taken at Joe Guppy's campsite near Weymouth July 1948.