

*From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history*

## **HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

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### **De HAVILLAND MOTHS FLY ON: IN SEATTLE**



Hatfield is linked by a shared history of aviation manufacturing to Seattle, Washington, a sea port city on the north west coast of the United States. Seattle is the home of Boeing, the world's largest aerospace company. The company moved its corporate headquarters to Chicago in 2001, but Seattle remains the main production site. A significant number of expat British aircraft industry professionals work for the company, and its many suppliers and partners, these people being highly sought after due to the high quality skills and knowledge gained from their British training and experience. One such worker, Ian Grace, runs the de Havilland Flying Club (DHFC), for owners, pilots and enthusiasts of de Havilland aircraft. The club was founded in 1962 (making it the oldest DH club in the world), originally named the DH Moth and Chipmunk Club. It has members worldwide, many of whom own, restore, and fly DH aircraft. Ian owns a 1938 Hatfield-built Tiger Moth, N-5490, which he acquired in 2011. The Moth is currently undergoing a meticulous restoration to full airworthiness and will be restored as closely as possible to its original 1938 specification and 20 E&RFTS (Elementary & Reserve Flying Training School) colours, including its original pre-war instrumentation, and full night flying equipment. The end result is expected to be the most original and authentically restored Tiger Moth to date.



N-5490 resting quietly at Harvey Field, Snohomish, Washington State, USA before being acquired by Ian Grace



De-rigged and ready for transportation  
Photos from [www.n5490.org](http://www.n5490.org)

#### **Contact the Editors:**

c/o Mill Green Museum, Hatfield, AL9 5PD  
Email [hatfieldhistory@ntlworld.com](mailto:hatfieldhistory@ntlworld.com)  
Chairman: **Mrs Chris Martindale**



Another aspect to the restoration is that the Moth will be a flying memorial; Ian is undertaking research to trace as many of those who flew it and trained on the plane during (and just before and after) WWII. Approximately 120 have been documented so far, and Ian has put together biographies of some of these, mostly Fleet Air Arm (naval aircraft) pilots. Many of these pilots were seconded to the RAF during the Battle of Britain. About a dozen of their logbooks have been traced which have N-5490 in them.

Ian's father, William (Bill) Grace, was a long term de Havilland worker, starting as an apprentice at Stag Lane in 1920, aged 17. He moved with the company to Hatfield in 1934. Bill was present when the 94 shop was bombed in 1940; he was blown across the tarmac, but survived. After the bombing, the manufacture of Mosquito components was dispersed. Being a relatively simple wooden aeroplane, over four hundred furniture factories, garages and workshops throughout the area were pressed into Mosquito component production. Bill's job was to co-ordinate this massive effort.

After the war, Bill was laid off along with thousands of other DH workers. He and his wife Clarice bought a tobacconists and confectioner's shop in Fleetville. More about Bill's life and work at DH's can be found at [www.n5490.org/Pilots/Bill%20Grace/Bill%20Grace.html](http://www.n5490.org/Pilots/Bill%20Grace/Bill%20Grace.html) In September 2016, the DHFC held a fly-in at Harvey Field, Snohomish, Washington. Members were invited to bring their aircraft along, to create an enthusiast's perfect day out.



Bill Grace and his wife Clarice,  
in the 1950's  
Photo: [www.n5490.org](http://www.n5490.org)



A Moth at the DHFC fly-in, Harvey  
Field, Washington.  
Photo: Dave Whittingham



Dave heading up in a Tiger Moth  
Photo: Dave Whittingham

Joy rides were available! Our co-editor's brother Dave Whittingham, who is one of the previously mentioned aircraft industry British expats, is pictured (above, right) looking extremely pleased to be going up in a Moth.

Ian Grace also runs a pre-war car club, ([www.vintageminor.co.uk](http://www.vintageminor.co.uk)) and is currently working towards organising a gathering at Old Warden this summer, to co-incide with the UK Moth club's annual rally. What a fantastic day out that will be!

The Boeing DH contingent are currently reading the Hatfield Local History Society's recent book 'Taking Off - Memories of de Havilland at Hatfield' after a number of copies winged their way out to the USA a couple of months ago.



## Growing Up in South Hatfield 1963-66

For tax purposes an antique is defined as being over 50 years old. And, for an increasing amount of us Hatfield New Town 'baby boomers', our childhood memories have now reached their half century - with some of us feeling a bit 'antique' because of it!

But Ann Halton (née Hewett) and Jon Brindle (née Jonathan) grew up in the same street at the same time in Cherry Way, South Hatfield - and both thought of it as a golden age for their pre-teenage selves.

### **Jon recalls:**

Looking back, it seems to me that all the houses where we lived had children of about our own age. Ann and I lived just 100 yards apart, we attended the same schools and we both made the most of the abundant countryside on our doorstep that stretched from our road, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to the railway line - not that this was a barrier! In the early 60's I remember cows grazing just 50 yards from our back garden. By then, Mr Jones, tenant of Downs Farm, had moved away as his farm buildings had been acquired for a new youth club (c. 1958), and his fields were destined for new housing. So those cows in the early 60's may have belonged to Hollier's Dairy. In my recollection, boys did 'boys' things and girls did whatever girls did! There were no mixed Famous Five gangs, but our adventures were just as exciting - if not downright dangerous or illegal by today's standards. Us boys built rickety tree houses; sailed on rafts in quarries; skated on frozen ponds during the bad winter of 1963; we made catapults, bows & arrows and we hunted (unsuccessfully) with them. We went bird nesting; built camps in the woods and and lit fires; raced brakeless trolleys down roads; made perilous swings out of old frayed rope; banged nails in tall trees as footholds in order to climb higher up; went fishing in the local ponds & rivers and generally trespassed anywhere we pleased - and were often chased by irate landowners and their dogs. It's a wonder that so many of us survived! There was never a dull moment. Our many football and cricket games often attracted a dozen or more a side. Then, from 1963, housing development began in the Northdown & Southdown Road areas and these sprawling building sites became our playgrounds too. Our parents never knew, though!



Downs Farm in 1966 after conversion to a youth club. The dark building was donated by ICI and re-assembled with help from club members and became the dance hall. It was abutted to some original farm buildings to the right.

The photo was taken by Ken Wright, from the football pitch (now lost).

The Jim MacDonald Centre replaced all the old buildings in the picture, but the red bricked farmhouse, behind, as seen, still remains.

### **Ann recalls:**

Yes we did have a wonderful childhood living right on the edge of the town next to miles of beautiful unspoilt countryside. We were so lucky. My memories are mainly of walking through fields of buttercups, daisies & clover covered in butterflies to visit ponds (Bunchleys & the lily pond at the back of Five Oaks house) and watching tadpoles, frogs & newts swimming around. I used to go past Bunchleys further towards Welham Green & there were a few more ponds in the fields there too. I used to put small sheets of wood on the ground in the fields (my dad was/is a carpenter) & go back to check them the next day to see how many

toads I could find! I remember the boys building camps out of hay bales! Also, I remember when Cherry Way swing park was built - it was packed with excited kids every day. And I remember the massive bonfire at the back of the Cherry Way houses on Nov 5th every year. Also, before the swings were installed there was a pond - probably what caused the foundation problems with that church building! Always a very wet area down those fields! I've loved ponds, fish & amphibians all my life because of my childhood experiences. We used to walk down to the railway line & run across it to play in the fields alongside the Great North Road. You could walk from our house through the fields & woods to Hatfield train station via Badger Wood (at the bottom of St. Audrey's school field) & then through the Oxlease houses to Stream Woods, then under a tunnel next to Grays then along the Great North Road to the Station. Heaven!! Every weekend I would do that walk & carry on through the old town to Mrs Reeves stables at Mill Green, hang around the stables for a while then carry



The Howe Dell railway bridge by Gray's garage that Ann describes. It led to Stream Woods but was filled in many years ago. Photo by David Dickenson

on "up the cart track" and then under the railway bridge into Stanborough swimming pool. Then later on walk all the way home, mucking about and playing along the way.

Can you imagine kids doing that today? To us it was just normal! I used to play out with Debbie Ketcher and other girls but I've lost contact with most. My parents still live there - dad built his own house about 40 years ago in Old Leys Which is just off Cherry Way.

Their garden backs on to Southway Road, which we knew as cornfields all

those years ago. They would have been severely affected by the proposed industrial Incinerator (next to Bunchley's pond), I'm so pleased it was finally refused!!

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## Home Covert Revisited

In Issue 77, June 2010, we wrote about Beech Cottage. It was once a gamekeepers house in the woods known as Home Covert. The cottage, now demolished, came under the ownership of De Havillands. Part of the gamekeeper's role was to rear poults (young pheasants) for the shoots which would be attended by the likes of DH Directors such as Alan Butler and Geoffrey De Havilland. Since 2010 the old airfield site has been opened to the public and re-named Ellenbrook Fields, but more housing is expected to be built there and, it seems, 32 years worth of gravel quarrying may soon be starting too, with ten pits planned. However, some remnants of past use still remains in the area, and a recent stroll in Home Covert revealed a broken wagon with steel barrels - possibly for deisel - and a mechanised saw which, presumably, was used in forestry management before the woodsmen upped sticks!

