

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 105 June 2017

ICONIC HOUSE TO BOW OUT



Many will instantly recognise the house in the photo, which stands to the north of the crossroads, opposite the Red Lion. Its address is 102 Great North Road. But today it lies vacant, awaiting demolition to make way for a proposed elderly care home. Abutting it are numbers 98 and 100. All were built during the 1930s by an architect from WGC, believed to be a Mr. Green.

The main house had six bedrooms over 3 floors, two of which

utilised the loft area and had Dormer windows to the rear. Next door was another building, divided into two apartments. The architect had planned to live in the house and rent out the apartments for a retirement income, but died before moving in.

At some point after, a Mr & Mrs Horne lived there, and in 1959, the well known local pharmacist Nina Barnes took up residence with her husband and children.

Her son, Nick, recalls the house had high ceilings and a pulley system of wires connected to bells around the house. The wires were terminated in a wooden cabinet downstairs. Perhaps Mr. Green envisaged employing live-in care staff, who would, typically, be roomed in the loft!

Nina and family moved the short distance into 102 GNR from their home at Rose Cottage in Bull Stag Green (which is still a home), about 100 yards away.

Nina, originally from Wales, moved to Hatfield aged 18 in about 1935.



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Chairman: **Mrs Chris Martindale**



HLHS member Brian Lawrence wrote this (*abridged*) article about Nina:

‘She came to Hatfield to live with an aunt and began training at McSweeney’s Chemist Shop in Great North Road, Old Hatfield. To pursue her studies she attended college in Holloway Road in the evenings at what is now London Metropolitan University and subsequently at the London College of Pharmacy. She qualified at the beginning of WW2 and after returning to McSweeney’s for a short while she moved on to Welwyn Department Store (now John Lewis) but spent most of the war years working in the laboratory at the Nivea Factory in WGC. During this time she lived for a while in Newtown House in St Albans Road.

She met her future husband, Spencer Barnes, at a dance in the Public Hall in Old Hatfield and they married in 1942. In 1954 Nina opened her first [pharmacy] in the now demolished Roe Green shopping parade, Bishop’s Rise, and over the years, with son Andrew becoming more and more involved in the business they built up a chain of 10 shops which were eventually sold to Lloyds Chemist Group.

The Lloyds chemist on the Common, opposite Lister House, was once a Nina Barnes pharmacy. Justina Aileen Barnes (Nina) spent her final years in St Audrey’s Care Home and died at the age of 99 on 4 April 2016.’



Nina at her granddaughters wedding in 2006

HLHS Member Gerald Moore writes:

Dear Editors,

I draw your attention to the photograph [opposite] of Holliers Dairy / Police Station on the back of Newsletter 103. The photo shown is different to the photo I have which, I think, is an original, with the date 1874 on the back. On the left hand side is a girl seated. She is my Gandmother, then aged 12. Next to her is her Father, John (Jehu) Bourne, who was a Police Inspector. He came from Maldon in Essex and served at different Police Stations in Hertfordshire.

I feel they moved into No.3 Albion Villas (also known as Terrace / Flint Cottages) in the New Town around 1874 - according to a house insurance document I have.



My Grandmother carried on living there until her death, having had six children in a very small house. My two Aunts stayed in the house until it was pulled down to make way for the Woolco Department Store.

My Father-In-Law, Charles (Charlie) Wick, also worked for Holliers Dairy with a horse and cart, delivering in the Old Hatfield area around the 1930s and 40s.

Left: Albion Villas

HARPSFIELD HALL

In December 2015 a large, new Wetherspoon's pub opened in Hatfield, which they named Harpsfield Hall. A blue plaque outside informs a little of the historic Harpsfield Hall which was demolished during the 1930s when the De Havilland aircraft factory set up in Hatfield. Photos of the De Havilland site festoon the pub but none show the Hall after which the pub was named. It seems the pub's interior designers thought it was the art deco Admin block! The Gape family of St. Albans once owned the old Hall and surrounding farmland, and it was let by them to various tenant farmers throughout the 1800s. The last tenants were the Sinclair family who, headed by James, in 1863 took up the tenancy to farm the 300 acres there after moving to Hatfield from Stirlingshire in Scotland.

There doesn't appear to be too much history about the place, as Chris Reynolds states:

'The name Harpsfield dates back to the 13th century, but it was not a manor, and hence has been ignored by the main published County Histories'.

He notes it was also known as Hatfield Hall at some early date. A map of 1630, may support this as a field close to the building was called Hatfield Grene.

It still bore the alternative name 'Hatfield Hall' in sale documents of 1814 where its 'modern furniture and effects' - including a barrel organ - took six days to auction off. This gave rise to the supposition that the Hall was a much bigger place than the one last used as a residence in the 1930s. However, a painting of Harpsfield Hall, believed by the Sinclairs to date from the late 1700s to early 1800s, appears to suggest otherwise; as this painting shows the same number of first floor windows plus the bronze eagles which still stood proudly on each corner of the building frontage at roof level until demolition in the 1930s.

At one point the area was considered a hamlet, 'to describe the several agricultural labourers cottages' there, and a school was also noted on the 1630 map. The nearby messuage at the place named Hogs Yeotham also had cottages and ten acres to farm, which gives further credence to a community thereabouts.

After De Havillands bought Harpsfield Hall, the Sinclair family moved to Tollgate Farm in Colney Heath and took with them some mementos from the old house.

Included among them were the two bronze eagle statues. These were then remounted on pillars outside the entrance to Tollgate Farm, but one was later stolen. The other suffered some damage and has recently been undergoing repairs by specialists in Norfolk.

We thank Lindsay Sinclair for his kindness in providing the images shown.



Harpsfield Hall c1890. The eagles are just visible



One of the ancient bronze eagles

HATFIELD STREET NAME SIGNS

By Jocelyn Bailey

‘These photographs, taken March 2017, are of some of the very few remaining street name signs put up in the new town by the Hatfield Development Corporation, c1955 -1960s. (We came to Hatfield in 1966.) I realised recently how very few are left, so I went out to track



some down. I covered most of the roads on either side of the whole length of Bishops Rise, and on either side of Cavendish Way. I think they are a lot more distinctive than the current standard issue and they may well all disappear before too long.’

As Jocelyn observes, these old concrete street signs are disappearing and are gradually being replaced by heavy duty plastic ones. And this notable change in street furniture leads us, perhaps, to consider future street names. It seems that Hatfield is constantly being crammed with new housing developments and the Borough Council are tasked with providing many thousands more. A new village with c1200 homes is being proposed for Simonshyde; a similar amount is proposed off Green Lanes at Stanboroughbury; around 120 homes are also proposed for the fields adjacent to Angerland Common by the cemetery.

And it is mooted that hundreds more are being considered for land on the former airfield site as an extension to the newish housing estate there called Salisbury Village; which seems to have all its streets named after De Havilland / aircraft related themes such as: Mosquito Way, Cunningham Avenue, The Runway, Chipmunk Chase, Horsa Gardens etc.

Whilst this is understandable, given the important 60 year association Hatfield had with aviation, there are *other* subjects to consider for new road names in this area. 400 years ago field and place names such as: Upwood Lane; Flogs Yotcham; Coppye Lane; Sheepcote Mead; Horley Grene; Brook in Pyghtle, Megs Garden; Little Nuns Brache and Great Bellfield.

Here’s a couple of suggestions for future road signs:



BEN FRENCH



**Ben French
RIP**

We regret to inform that Ben died in April. He was 97. Members will recall our article in Newsletter 103 which reported that he had just published his memoirs entitled ‘Biplanes to Rockets’ which chronicled his 48 years in aviation at Hatfield.

Ben provided some great recollections for our society and we learnt from him that the airfield site had both a speedway and greyhound racing track in the early 1930s. Also he saw the Junkers spy plane which took photos of the De Havilland site in 1938. He was a mine of anecdotes and will be missed.