

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 107 December 2017

HATFIELD's ROCK & ROLL CAFE

By 1956 Simmons had taken over Hulks' bakers shop (pictured) at 84 St. Albans Road. It was roughly opposite today's Lloyds bank in the town centre. Front of shop was the bakery counter and to the rear was a tea room. In around 1960 Simmons left and a new cafe named the Wander Inn took over. The proprietors installed a juke box and a frothy coffee machine. It was soon a popular 'hang out' for local teenagers and became Hatfield's version of Soho's famous 2 i's coffee bar.

Lindy Thomas recalls:

"In those days I was Linda Williams. The Wander Inn was almost in the town centre alongside pubs etc. I don't remember the pubs as I was a little young. My friend Jeanne (who sadly passed away in Jan) and I used to go in, and collected cups and washed up to earn a coffee. We didn't have much money back then as we were still at school. Most of us in the cafe were teenagers and several had motorbikes. Rockers!! This was quite an attraction to us and we did love the Juke Box. I remember it clearly. Jukebox on the right as you walked in, the tables & chairs and big bay type windows. The counter was a big space with glass front and a frothy coffee machine behind. Small kitchen out back. It was *the* place to be; amazing fun for everyone and the latest music. I can still recall the Wander Inn's sign and the motorbikes parked outside; the shop door wide open and hearing the loud music blaring out; and I can visualise the skinny teenagers in tight trousers and leather jackets, all lingering over frothy coffee. Oh yes, and girls in their frilly net petticoat skirts. Still had mine till a couple of years ago! Ahhh those were the days. Unfortunately I can't remember the owners name but I think he may have been Italian. It's been way over 50 years so my memory is lacking in some areas! We then went on to the Breaks Youth Club which increasingly took over our lives from the time we were 14 or 15".

Alan Upson recalls going to the Wander Inn around 1961 as a 4th former at Hatfield Grammar with his mates after school - still in their uniforms. And Barry Lewington remembers jiving there to a Del Shannon record; perhaps his smash hit *Runaway* which topped both the US and UK charts in 1961.

By 1966 the old Hulks / Simmons / Wander Inn building was ready for demolition and the cafe moved 250 yards east next to Grays' motor showroom at 4 Kennelwood Lane.

With thanks for research provided by Brian Lawrence.



Provided by Ian Mathews

Contact the Editors:

c/o Mill Green Museum, Hatfield, AL9 5PD

Email hatfieldhistory@ntlworld.com

Chairman: **Mrs Chris Martindale**



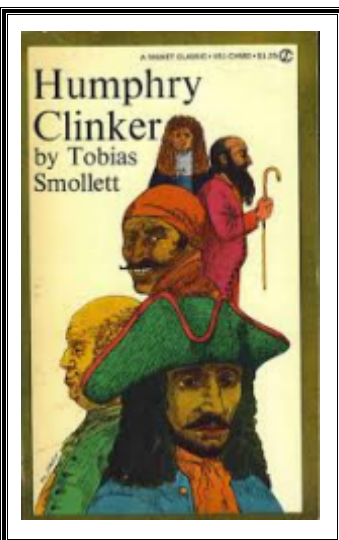
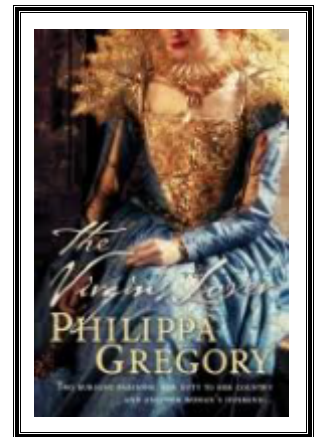
HATFIELD IN FICTION

By Hazel K. Bell (abridged)

Hatfield, with its stately home and pole position on the main road north from London, figures large in history books. The diaries and memoirs of John Evelyn, Samuel Pepys, Beatrix Potter and Lord David Cecil also make much delightful reference to the district. Fiction, too, often features Hatfield. Writers of historical fiction are particularly drawn to depict Hatfield and its eponymous House, but their envisionings have to be purely imaginative.

The earliest references (to the earliest period, that is, not to the writing) are those in *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel.¹ Her book's hero, Thomas Cromwell, visiting Hatfield House in 1533, remembers earlier visits as a labouring child when "it was Cardinal Morton's place", speaking of the great staircase: "Never was he allowed to run up it; there was a back staircase for boys like him, carrying wood or coals".

Philippa Gregory, in *The Virgin's Lover*,² shows us how she supposes Elizabeth I may have reacted to the news of the death of her half-sister: 'All the bells in Hertfordshire were ringing for Elizabeth, pounding the peal into her head ... Elizabeth threw open the shutters of Hatfield Palace, flung open the window, wanting to be drowned in the noise, deafened by her own triumph ... Elizabeth laughed out loud at the racket which hammered out the news: poor sick Queen Mary was dead at last, and Princess Elizabeth was the uncontested heir. "Thank God," she shouted up at the whirling clouds.'



Tobias Smollett, in his novel published in 1771, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*,³ invokes Hertfordshire's unhappy reputation for being prey to highwaymen.

Matthew Bramble relates the adventures of his family party as they travel through England & Scotland. As they approach Hertfordshire: "About a mile short of Hatfield, the postilions, stopping the carriage, gave notice to Clinker that there were two suspicious fellows a-horseback, at the end of a lane, who seemed waiting to attack the coach. Humphry forthwith apprised my uncle, declaring he would stand by him to the last drop of his blood; and unflinching his carbine, prepared for action". Martin, the highway-man, rides up at that moment and assists Clinker to see off the rogues.

Jane Austen, in *Pride & Prejudice*,⁴ published in 1813, recognises Hatfield's being a prime stop to change horses while travelling north. When Colonel Foster is trying to trace Lydia Bennet, who has so shamefully eloped with the wicked Mr. Wickham, he enquires at the inns in Barnet and Hatfield, as recounted in a letter written by Lydia's distressed sister:

'He did trace them easily to Clapham, but no farther; for on entering that place they removed into a hackney-coach and dismissed the chaise that brought them from Epsom. All that is known after this is that they were seen to continue the London road. After making every possible enquiry on that side London, Colonel F. came on into Hertfordshire, anxiously renewing them at all the turnpikes, and at the inns in Barnet and Hatfield'.

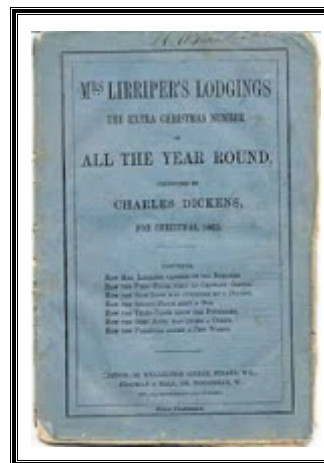
Charles Dickens famously also recognised Hatfield and its coaching inns as an obvious place to rest and seek shelter in flight from London, as he shows us in *Oliver Twist*.⁵

After murdering Nancy, Bill Sikes flees to Hatfield and takes refuge in what must be the Eight Bells Inn. There he attracts notice, though, and:

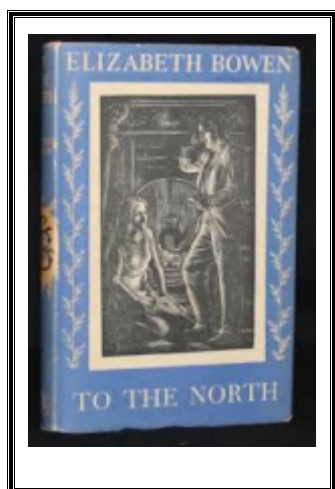
‘Sikes with a hideous imprecation overthrew the table and burst out of the house.... finding that he was not followed, and that they most probably considered him some drunken sullen fellow, turned back up the town, and getting out of the glare of the lamps of a stage-coach that was standing in the street, was walking past, when he recognised the mail from London, and saw that it was standing at the little post-office. ... Sikes remained standing in the street, ... agitated by no stronger feeling than a doubt where to go. At length he went back again, and took the road which leads from Hatfield to St. Albans’.

Dickens also wrote of Hatfield in a story published in 1863, in *All the Year Round*, a British weekly literary magazine that he founded, owned and edited. The story is called “Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings”,⁶ and begins:

‘My poor Lirriper being behindhand with the world and being buried at Hatfield church in Hertfordshire, not that it was his native place but that he had a liking for the Salisbury Arms where we went upon our wedding-day and passed as happy a fortnight as ever happy was’. Mrs Lirriper pays off her late husband’s debts, and then ‘put a sandwich and a drop of sherry in a little basket and went down to Hatfield church-yard outside the coach and kissed my hand and laid it with a kind of proud and swelling love on my husband’s grave, though bless you it had taken me so long to clear his name that my wedding-ring was worn quite fine and smooth when I laid it on the green green waving grass’.



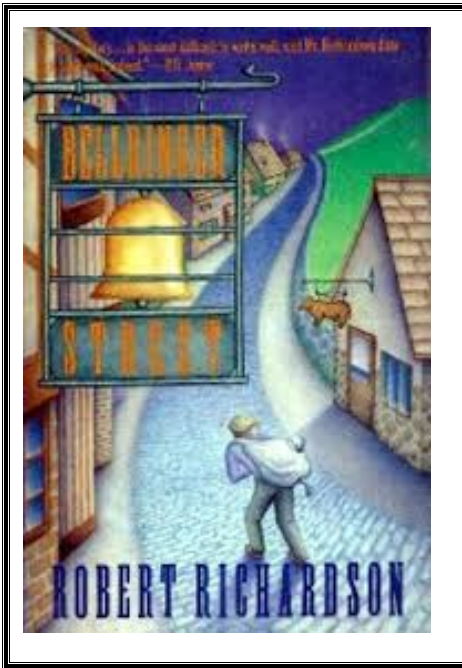
Elizabeth Bowen’s novel *To The North*⁷ was written in 1932, past the days of coach-and-horses travelling, but still the Great North Road enables rapid flight from London. Emmeline and Mark experience a nightmare nighttime drive from London to Baldock in her small open



car. Leaving St John’s Wood at 10.30 pm, they speed ‘up the winding curves of the Finchley Road, past Swiss Cottage station’, along “the wide black Hendon way, ... He saw ‘The NORTH’ written low, like a first whisper, on a yellow A.A. plate with an arrow pointing: they bore steadily north between spaced-out lamps, chilly trees, low rows of houses asleep, to their left a deep lake of darkness: the aerodrome. ‘Hendon,’ he said.... She turned right up the Barnet by-pass.... Banks rushed up to take their light each side of the by-pass; afterwards, ghostly young beeches along the kerb. ... Lit banks and low dark running skyline plaited their alternation over his brain ... this was Hatfield: they slipped round the town like thieves. People still stood in doorways or shadowed blinds’.

Robert Richardson, himself a resident of Old Hatfield, assured readers of his novel, *Bellringer Street*,⁸ in an Author’s note that “Those who know Fore Street and the neighbourhood of Old Hatfield, Hertfordshire, should be assured that only some local architecture and geography have been borrowed”. Fore Street and St Etheldreda’s Parish Church are only too recognisable in this passage, though:

‘They passed through the huge wooden lodge gates and back into the blinding heat, with St Barbara’s parish church on their left and the hundred yards of parallel terraced houses that made up Bellringer Street dropping steeply down the hill in front of them. The street was frequently loosely described as Georgian but in fact contained a range of styles from late



Regency to post-Victorian. The bricked-in archway in the wall rising to their right had once been an entrance for stage coaches when the twenty miles or so from Capley to London had been a day's journey and the building, now converted into flats, was one of eight hostelrys which the street had contained to cater for their passengers. Now only the ghosts of the pubs remained, immortalised in a verse written by one of their long-dead customers –

Candlestick, Kingmaker,
Arms of the baker,
Sun in the morning
And parson's retreat.
Cricketer, virgin
And coach driver urging,
These are the taverns of Bellringer Street.

Maltravers found it an agreeable thought that at one time a pint in every one - Candlestick, Earl of Warwick, Baker's Arms, Rising Sun, Pulpit, Batsman, Maid's Head and Coach and Horses in inebriated descent down the hill - would have resulted in a very pleasantly accumulated hangover. Lamentably, all were now converted into private houses with the exception of the Batsman which remained about halfway down to pursue its decent calling and – thanks be to God – the noble efforts of those dedicated to the preservation of real ale ensured that it still served beer infinitely more drinkable than the hideous chemical urine mass-produced in an evil flood by the giant brewery combines.’

Richardson goes on to offer sociological comment on Old Capley (aka Old Hatfield) and its relationship to the late-20c-established New Town:

‘For Bellringer Street was now in Old Capley, a name jealously guarded by its residents to disassociate themselves from the post-war Capley New Town which had been gracelessly stuck on to the western edges of the original. A distant prospect of its high-speed motorway, high-rise flats and high-intensity shopping centre was visible from the top of Bellringer Street, but ancient and modern maintained somewhat separate existences, each darkly suspecting the other of either well-heeled snobbishness or a deplorable habit of not bathing regularly. Both attitudes were seriously flawed, but class prejudice is a two-way street – or avenue.

With the commercial activity of the town moving westward with the new development, Old Capley had become something of a pleasant residential backwater, although a handful of local shops still survived in the square at the bottom of the hill.’

Fiction – but sadly blending into truth?

References

1. Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall*, Fourth Estate, 2009, pages 549, 550, 553-4.
2. Philippa Gregory, *The Virgin's Lover*, 2004, page 28
3. Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, 1771, chapter 46
4. Jane Austen, *Pride & Prejudice*, 1813, chapter 46
5. Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 1837, chapter 48
6. Charles Dickens, “Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings”, *All the Year Round*, 1863
7. Elizabeth Bowen, *To The North*, Penguin, 1932, chapter 28
8. Robert Richardson, *Bellringer Street*, Gollancz, 1988, pages 12-14

QUITE AN ACHIEVEMENT

The general area of Old Hatfield often throws up some unexpected gem of the town's erst-while 'hidden' history. Within and without St. Etheldreda's church, for example, there are so many structural features of interest which have their own story to tell. But how to get the back-story is not always easy. As good fortune has it, former Hatfield House archivist Robin Harcourt Williams has often kindly provided us with information, and he has done so again. At the top of Fore Street there is a short access road, to the left, which leads behind what was once the East Indian Chief pub.

High on a wall is a plaque about three feet in height and it is, in heraldry, termed an *achievement* - being 'a representation of a coat of arms having all the adjuncts to which a bearer of arms is entitled.'

Robin explained further:

“The arms are those of Thomas Goodrich as Bishop of Ely from 1534 until his death in 1554.

The achievement was evidently carved at a considerably later date. I suspect it was commissioned by F.W. Speaight. He restored the building and named it Goodrich House just before the First World War. He carried on a business there as the Hatfield Gallery of Antiques. It was certainly Speaight who added the plaque to the house.”



GREEN MAN MAY RE-OPEN

The Green Man at Mill Green was first recorded as a pub in 1850 and in business for 160 years before running into difficulties in 2010. Administrators were called in to run it but the pub closed a year later. In 1920 it was sold at auction by the Hatfield Brewery along with its close neighbouring sister pub, the Crooked Billet. At the time they sold 110 and 108 x 36 gallon brewers barrels respectively; not bad for a tiny hamlet! The Billet closed in 1936 but the Green Man continued under the ownership of Benskins.

But in April this year hopes were raised following an article by the WH Times:

“Gascoyne Cecil Estate has submitted two planning applications crystalising a scheme that it says has been extensively discussed with villagers since 2011.

David Morgan, chairman of the Mill Green Residents' Association, said: "We are looking forward to the well-loved and historic Green Man public house being not only re-opened but also enhanced by the proposed microbrewery and restaurant, which relate well to Mill Green Museum and Mill and to Old Hatfield's brewing heritage, and will also bring back more life and communal spirit back to our little hamlet."



Sale details of the pub in 1920



The Green Man in 1928

Dates for your Diary

Monday 11th December
2.30 pm

Our Christmas social meeting. Another chance to chat & socialise. There will be mince pies and tea. Bring along items of interest for members to see.



Monday, March 12th 2018, 2.15 for a 2.30 start
Justin Burgess - The History of Funeral Directing

Meetings are held at Friendship House, Wellfield Close, Hatfield AL10 0BU
Members £1 non members £2



Frogmore Paper Mill

Proposed Visit to Frogmore Paper Mill Mon 21st May 2018

Next May we have arranged a visit to Frogmore Paper Mills, the world's oldest mechanised paper mill and the birthplace of paper's industrial revolution

There will be more details to follow in our March newsletter, but if you are interested in coming along please get in touch so we have an idea of numbers.

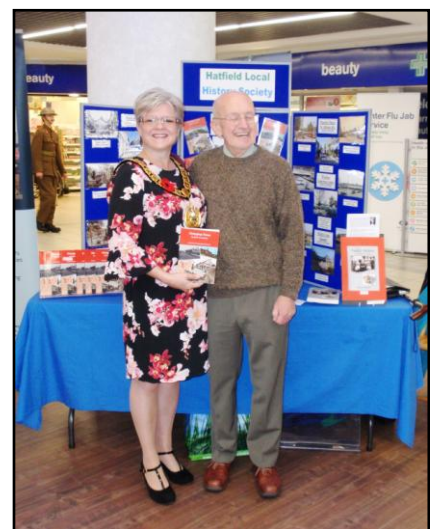
4th Welwyn Hatfield Heritage Fair

Another well attended Welwyn Hatfield Heritage Fair was held at the Howard Centre on Sat. 28th October.

The Society's stand was kept busy all day with lots of questions and reminiscences from members of the public. We also sold a number of our books.

The photo shows author Brian Lawrence with Welwyn Hatfield Mayor Lynne Sparks. The Mayor had just bought a copy of Brian's latest book 'Changing Times'

Thank you to those who helped to make this a very successful day



Brian Lawrence with
Mayor Lynne Sparks

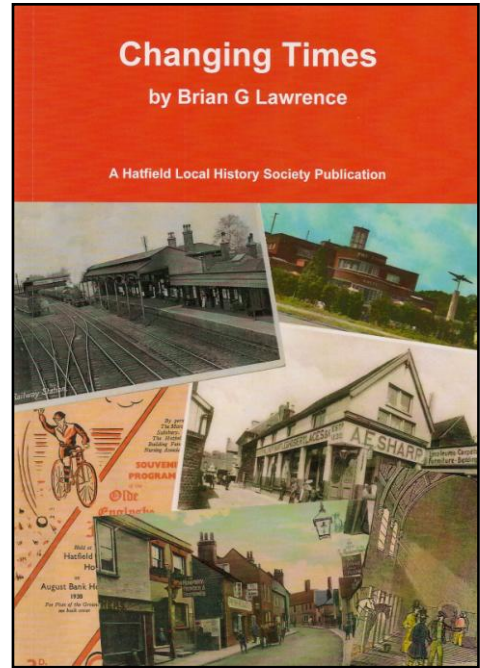
Changing Times
Stories of Hatfield Old & New
by Brian G Lawrence
£6.00
ISBN 978-0-9928416-7-6

Our Society's latest publication "Changing Times" is based on a series of interesting articles written by Brian Lawrence, for the "Hertfordshire Countryside" magazine over a period of 25 years from 1983 – 2007.

This well illustrated book reflects some of the diverse aspects of Hatfield's past that have come to Brian's attention and interested him over many years. Hatfield has experienced major fires, Royal visits and other noteworthy events. Major employers of labour have been attracted to the town over many years. Residents have been fortunate to have a famous stately home and its surrounding park in their midst but it must be admitted that some of the local development that has taken place during the second half of the twentieth century has dismally failed to match their hopes and expectations. The author hopes that this book will increase the reader's understanding of Hatfield's heritage as an enduring place of historical interest.

Subjects covered are: - Journey to school (1942), Hatfield Ablaze 1904 & 1908, Royal Visits 1846 & 1909, The Story of Hatfield Brewery, Memories of Hatfield Park, The Rail Crash of 1946, The Collapse of the Wrestlers Bridge (1966), Post War Prefabs, Hatfield's Box Factory, Butchers Bow Out, Looking Back—The Town that Went West, and the final chapter, Looking Forward, considers what the future might hold for Hatfield.

To buy a copy of the book contact Jane, HLHS publications secretary,



Newtown School: Part 2,
1939 – 1942 by Jean West

The outbreak of war made several important changes in that male teachers were called up, shelters were dug in the playing fields, we had to carry our gasmasks everywhere and windows had sticky tape over them. Some dads were called up; some mothers were required to work at de Havilland or Jack Olding, who made tank tracks, so lunches had to be supplied to those children who needed them. The school had no facilities for cooking lunches; these were supplied at a Salvation Army Hall up one of the Rights-of-Way in St Albans Road. I did try them a few times but wasn't impressed and continued to go home for dinner between 12 – 2pm so there was time to walk home and back. I recall my Dad being upset when one of the 'Shops' at DH's was bombed and several colleagues were killed; he also came home for his meal.

I think there was only one occasion when we had to go to the shelters for quite a long while and a box containing iron rations was carried by teachers into the shelters. Each pupil had to supply a small tin (usually an Oxo one) containing a small bar of plain chocolate, tube of Smarties, barley sugars and similar and to avoid being raided the boxes were in charge of the staff. There was always a constant 'Miss, can we open our boxes' being asked and only once were they actually permitted to be broached. Some attempts were made

to continue lessons in the shelters but not very often. Once or twice an exercise in wearing gasmasks in class was made, rubbing the eyepiece with dry soap was said to stop them steaming up but boys could and did make rude noises while wearing them resulting in much hilarity.



This class photo was taken in 1941/2. Jean is in the second row, fourth from the right. The teacher is Miss Harradine

Girls who knitted in handcraft classes (not me, I never learnt to knit) did make scarves, helmets and mittens or gloves for servicemen out of the regulation khaki or RAF blue wool and were sent off where needed and often Savings Weeks were a feature of school and there was great competition to see which class could raise the most. Savings Certificates at 15/- each were popular (75p in today's money). Two wooden huts were built at one side of the school to contain two classes, the top class was there and Miss Harradine was a popular teacher, I do recall one lad who announced that he'd like the war to continue until he was old enough to fight – he got short shrift from the teacher who was incensed by his wish.

Miss Leonard was another popular teacher who when Mr Dawes came back from the war married him, which we girls considered very romantic! Miss Cottrell was an older teacher - at least 35 which is ancient when you're 10 – but it was her that installed a love of poetry in many of us and I am grateful to all those dedicated women who taught me at primary school.



Newtown School just before demolition in 1998

Eventually we had to sit the 11-plus or scholarship exam as we called it and a friend (Sylvia Webb of Selwyn Drive) and I passed to go to St Alban's Girls Grammar School, well equipped to deal with all the things we were taught there.

Little did I know that years later I would teach evening classes at Newtown School to adults and that I would attend a picture framing course in the wooden hut where I'd been a pupil all those years ago.