

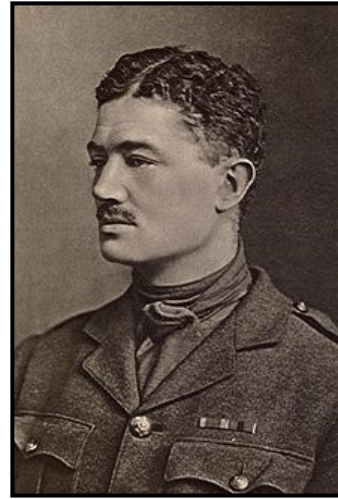
Dates For Your Diary

Monday 10th Sept. 7.15 for a 7.30 start

Julian Grenfell:
Hertfordshire's War Poet.

Discover the life of this extraordinary man. A life with so much promise, tragically cut short in the Great War.

A talk given by a member of the
Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies Team



Julian Grenfell 1915 with
DSO ribbon on uniform.

Monday 10th Dec. 2.15 start
Christmas Social Afternoon.

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

Memories of Hatfield When I Grew Up. Part 3

By Donald James Hyde

This is the third of three instalments of a speech given to the Hatfield Mitre Club Christmas 1990 when Mr Hyde was President of the Hatfield Rotary Club.

A lot of my most vivid memories come from the War Days. Sunday morning 3rd Sept 1939 I was a messenger boy helping receive evacuees coming to Hatfield from Stroud Green, Finsbury Park! We heard Neville Chamberlain's speech on the radio with the words "We are at War with Germany" ringing in our ears, when the sirens went for that false alarm on that morning did we really run from the Church back home to get our gas masks? On reflection what a daft thing to have done.

By this time a lot of the keepers and workers in Hatfield Park had been called up. Lord Salisbury had the idea of recruiting six boys to act as Junior Park Keepers. Mr Oliver who was Headmaster of St. Audreys at the time obviously had a hand in the selection the boys of which I was one. We had to go up to Hatfield House to the South Front, knock on the door and wait for the Butler who then escorted us up to his Lordships Workroom. We received a signed appointment card and were given a Rosette which we wore on duty. Lord Salisbury wanted us to patrol his private gardens down to the lake where numerous ducks lived, their numbers seemed to reduce week by week. The numbers always seemed to decrease most rapidly towards the end of the week coinciding when convalescing soldiers at Hatfield House went on weekend pass!

We must have done a good job, every now and then we were summoned to the House to see Lord Salisbury in his workroom, with floor covered in sawdust and wood shavings, to be given our reward - or a little something as his Lordship called it. We all had to line up in a row and his Lordship proceeded to give each of us five one shilling pieces which he had in piles on his work bench. Five shillings was quite a small fortune to us boys. On one occasion I can remember Lord Salisbury saying "Well Lads, I'm getting old and I can't count as well as I use to, I might have made a mistake in the number of shillings I'm giving you"! He then proceeded to hand out the money. As soon as he had given "Tut" Young his money "Tut's" hand shot up, "Please Sir you have given me six" "Ah well done" said his Lordship taking the offending shilling back "I can see you boys are an honest lot".

But the bombing incidents - they were dreadful - 34 killed and more injured. 3rd October 1940 four bombs dropped by a Junkers 88 hit 94 shop of de Havilland killing 21 and injuring 70 workers. The Bofors gun on the roof of the main office block hit the German plane which crashed at Cole Green. It did not stop the German Rear Gunner firing at the workers of Jack Oldings as they ran to their shelters.

The captured German Airman were brought to Hatfield Police Station —it was just as well that the people of Hatfield were denied access to them.

In 1941 there was an incident when a Molotov Breadbasket was dropped. Two high explosive bombs and a parcel of incendiary bombs. The H.E. bombs fell behind Stockbreach Rd., one where Burgess the undertakers are now and the other near to Streader's Yard behind the Odeon cinema. The incendiaries fell on Crawford's Farm buildings at Birchwood. This completely burnt out the one and only combine harvester for miles around. The bomb which fell behind Stockbreach Rd. could easily have changed my life —you see the girl who became my wife (Marian nee' Philips) lived in one of the houses which was extensively damaged. One of the doors to their living room had blown off and landed on top of her. Fortunately for me she survived without lasting damage.

Two flying bombs – doodlebugs - fell on Selwyn Cres. killing several people and the other in the top of a tree in the playground of St Audrey's School in Endymion Road. This flying bomb destroyed the school and the cottages opposite causing considerable damage to the buildings around including the Congregational Church. The damaged caused was the worst by a flying bomb in the Eastern Region.

That night a lad blinded by the explosion won the Scouts V.C. by rescuing his mother from their wrecked home. It was also the night when Steve Curtis who was the caretaker of the Public Hall and who had lost his leg in the WW1 was killed – Steve had always said that he was sure that the Gerries would get him in the end and they had.

I was an ARP messenger, I still remember vividly the scene as I was taking a message from the Control Room in the basement under the Council Offices to the Incident Room, set up close to the damaged buildings. Fire engines had their headlights and spotlights playing on the scene, it was dreadful.

It was also the night when tragic farce took place in the Control Room. The blast had shattered a panel of glass, splinters had been thrown across the room onto the clothes of the two Duty Officers, Dr. Burvill Holmes and Skipper Day, both well known local figures. They jumped out of their bunk beds and into their clothes with Skipper Day quickly putting on trousers only to shout out in agony as he sat down - splinters of glass were biting into his flesh! When other ARP staff arrived they saw an unusual sight. There was Dr Burvil Holmes with a pair of tweezers in his hand pulling out splinters of glass from Skipper Day's bare backside.

True or False? That is the story I was told but I will leave it to you to decide - but what a note to finish on!

Breaks Manor Fundraising Event Saturday 6th October

6.30pm to 10.30pm

**Breaks Manor, Link Drive,
Hatfield AL10 8TP**



Did you go to the Breaks in the 1950s & 60s? Come and enjoy this fundraising event, and catch up with old friends at Hatfield's longest serving youth centre.

Entertainment includes:-

A film show about the Breaks. Live 60s music from local band 'The Strangers'

Licensed Bar

Ticket only: £5.00 per person