

Hatfield This Century

Hatfield people explore their history from 1900

No. 12

Newsletter

March 1994

Editor: F.Cox

Congratulations to John Gray. His history of football in Hatfield from 1900 to 1940, entitled "Up The Blues", is available from the Hatfield library.

Thank you John for pointing out that the Stonehouse was not a Benskins house. The tipples sold was Taylor Walkers and Charringtons. Memories of Tolly Ale?

Reg. Coleman tells us that over seventy recordings of memories of local people have been made. If you know of anyone who might be willing to be interviewed and have their recollections of Hatfield recorded please contact Reg. Memories and stories of ongoing projects would be especially welcome.

Sue has had some response to her request for volunteers to help with the New Town exhibition, but more are required. It is planned to mount the exhibition from 30 April to 3rd July and anyone who can help with sorting and mounting photographs, transcribing tapes, dealing with loans etc. is asked to contact Sue on 271362 at the museum. Also loans of photographs or memorabilia of Newtown would be appreciated,,

Your committee is considering arranging more members' meetings and hope to be able to present a comprehensive programme. Currently Stuart Mackay will be giving a presentation on the D.H. moth aircraft, at Birchwood Leisure Centre on April 26 at 7.30. Other ideas for talks etc. have been received but members' suggestions would be welcome. What subject or area, of research would you like to hear about?

GROWING UP IN HATFIELD BEFORE 1945

An excerpt from the chapter by George Bennett

A memorable event was the County Show, held in Hatfield Park every year. Some of the boys at St. Audrey's school were nominated by Mr. Oliver, the headmaster, to help sell the catalogues and were paid two or three pence a programme; we were also allowed to sell jumping-cards later in the afternoon, between three and five when the show-jumping took place. When we had sold our cards, if there was room at the back of the stands, we used to find a place on a form and see the show. Between September and March each year Lord Cranborne used to organize a number of game-shoots in the park. On these occasions Mr. Lawrence, the Park policeman, used to arrange for a number of beaters to be available. These were usually recruited from the Estate staff or from the unemployed. Once, while working at the Estate Office I joined the party of beaters over the Christmas holiday. This entailed reporting at 9,30 a.m. at the Saw-mills, where we were ordered to spread out across the fields and to walk towards Essendon West End. This made the partridges rise for the party of guns from Hatfield House, who were

No. 12

usually screened near a wooded area. There was a lunch break between 12.30 and 1 o'clock at Essendon Lodge where liquid refreshment was provided. After lunch we walked the wooded area to enable the gun party to tackle the pheasants. This was an interesting and unusual day, but by four o'clock, when the shoot finished, we felt rather weary. We were paid six shillings and sixpence.

An extract from **"Banking and Finance in Hat-Field"** by Gerald Millington (written in 1960)

The first record of banking in Hatfield was in 1877 when a branch of the Hitchin bank of Sharples, Tuke, Lucas & Seebohm was opened in the front room of Mr. Groom, plumber, in Fore Street, next to the butcher shop occupied by Butlers. The office opened on Thursdays from 10.30 to 1.30

The partners of this bank were all Quakers and probably attended the Meeting House at Hitchin where they would have met members of the Pryor family from Baldock, who could have persuaded them to open in Hatfield to conduct the Brewery accounts.

Sharples, Tuke etc. became one of the 18 founder members of Barclays Bank Ltd., (or Barclay and Co. Ltd., as it was then known) in 1896. The London and Westminster Bank opened a sub office at 55 Great North Road, in premises now used by a cafe, on 29 November 1909. It opened two days a week.

The following year saw Barclays transfer to premises adjacent to the Salisbury Hotel and extend its opening to two days a week. In 1920 when Benskins took over Pryor Reid and closed the brewery, Barclays became an independent branch, opening full banking hours, in Pryor Reid's old offices, Mr. Girling was the first manager. By 1929 Westminster Bank had extended and moved to new premises, opposite Waters Garage, on 1st January of that year, with Harry Wright as manager.

Barclays also increased in business and in 1934 became the local bank for the de Havilland Aircraft Co. Ltd. Many D.H. employees also opened accounts so that another branch was opened on Harpsfield Broadway adjacent to the factory, in 1938. This branch subsequently moved to larger premises at the other end of the Broadway.

Following the 1939/1945 war and the development of Hatfield as a satellite town the possibilities for extension of business were quickly grasped by the non represented banks in Hatfield. Barclays had a branch near the scheduled development area, but the Midland Bank was first to open an office on the site of the new town centre. The branch was opened in St. Albans Road on 21st June 1948, in what had been a ladies hat shop run by Miss May Kentish.

Westminster followed by opening a sub-branch next door to the Midland in the old Dawson (Drapers) shop on 20th September 1951. This became a full branch in January 1960.

In 1956 Lloyds Bank opened a "clerk in charge" office in new premises neighbouring J.Tingey & Sons, grocers,.

Thanks to George and Gerald for supplying the information in the above items, Other reminiscences would be welcome for inclusion in future news letters.

Retirement of Dick Busby.

The popular librarian at Hat-field has recently retired and in appreciation of his co-operation and assistance a donation has been made to his retirement presentation. Now you will have time to spare, Dick,, come and join us!