

Hatfield This Century

Hatfield people explore their History from 1900

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Editor: F.C«x

The fourth Annual General Meeting of the association was held at the Hatfield Library on 26th May .

Terry Pankhurst chaired the meeting and reported on the activities of the past year.

Thanks were extended to the members of the committee for their supportive activities particularly in respect of public meetings and the involvement with the preservation of the de Havilland local history.

Having completed three years service on the committee, Terry will be relinquishing his office. Although nominated for re-election, pressure of work and domestic commitments persuaded him to decline. Our sincere thanks are extended for his interest, support and leadership during his sojourn on the committee.

Reg Coleman and Dennis Jenner also completed their term on the committee. Both were prepared to accept nomination for re-election and were confirmed for another three years.

Other nominees, for various reasons, did not seek election so that the current committee consists of only eight members instead of nine. The next meeting of the committee will be held on the 19th July.

After the business of the meeting had been completed the 29 members and friends present were engrossed by a talk with slide pictures on "The Essendon Find", a recently discovered local archaeological site of Iron Age artefacts given by Mrs. Wendy Parry, assistant curator of the Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service.

Following upon the publication of the New Town booklet, the exhibition of photographs and memorabilia was launched at the Mill Green Museum on the 30th of April and will continue until the 3rd of July. Congratulations to Sue and her assistants for a very interesting display. Amongst the items on show was an anagram game compiled by the late Mrs. Livermore. For your amusement a version prepared by the WHMS is enclosed. Answers next time!

On the 26th of April about 40 members and friends attended the meeting at the Birchwood Leisure Centre for an illustrated talk on the de Havilland Moth type aircraft given by Stuart Mackay, the secretary of the Moth Club. This covered more than just the moths and instigated much discussion long after the talk was finished. I seem to remember while working at No. 1 EFTS (the RAF flying school) that the Tiger Moths there were fitted with bomb racks for, I think, eight 25lb bombs beneath the wings. This at the time of the threatened invasion in 1940/41. Can anyone confirm this?

Hatfield Music Festival. Shirley Knapp is seeking help with preparing a history of the festival from its origins in 1980 to the present day. The work would include co-ordinating information and photographs held by the Festival organisers, following up the progress of previous winners and preparing articles for the local press. If you would like to help please contact Shirley .

Whilst researching old copies of the Herts Advertiser, Brian Lawrence came across the following item dated 5 March 1919:

"Lord Salisbury presided at a Public Meeting to consider the provision of a memorial to commemorate heroes of the parish. The Committee had rejected suggestions that it should take the form of a hospital, an institute and baths and felt that it should be a 'pure memorial'.

The Committee had considered sites and had reduced the options to two:- the first the Ryde Field near the junction of the St. Albans Road and the Great North Road and the second to the left of the main entrance to Hatfield Park.

The architect, Mr. R. Baker, one of the most eminent architects in England who had been responsible for government buildings in Pretoria and Delhi had visited Hatfield and was overwhelmingly in favour of the second site. The estimated cost was £1,500.

Dr. Lovell Drage spoke in favour of the memorial being erected at the cemetery and put forward a resolution to that **effect.**

Mr. Crawford proposed an amendment that the meeting should accept the architect's recommendation and this was passed 'almost unanimously'.

The Committee hoped that some contribution, however small, would be made by every inhabitant of the parish."

Apropos the above report Ron White writes:

"On 10th October 1944 during the hours of darkness, a German VI flying bomb flew across Old Hatfield, the staccato sounding motor cut out and the missile dived, exploding in the St. Audrey's School/Primrose Cottages area. Among the victims of this incident was my mother's elderly aunt, Mrs. Jane Skeggs, nee Kemp of 24 Primrose Cottages, daughter of Hatfield's centenarian William Kemp (1822 -1927), war widow of World War 1 and an employee of Hatfield Estate.

On Hatfield's war memorial Jane Skeggs' name is inscribed on a panel flanking the panels of World War 1. She is commemorated cheek by jowl with her fallen husband, Private Albert Edward Skeggs of the Beds. Regt. (France, August 1916). Epitaphs of a soldier and his widow both killed by the same enemy in two different wars 28 years apart."

Do you have any interesting stories, amusing anecdotes or reminiscences of Hatfield past? Those memories recalled over a cup of tea or at the family party. "Do you remember when.....?" Share them with other members. I will be pleased to include them in future issues of the Newsletter, and they could be included in the museum archives.