

# HATFIELD THIS CENTURY

Hatfield People Explore Their History Since 1900

No. 21

**NEWSLETTER**

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM was held at Oxlease House on the 14th of May. 21 members were present with Brian Lawrence in the chair. The treasurer, Isobel Cox, had submitted the financial report which showed that the group had £1,784.58 in the bank. Thanks were extended to Maurice Richardson for auditing the accounts.

Committee. Dennis Jenner had submitted his resignation but will continue as a valued member of the group. Thanks had been expressed for his work and support on the committee. The retiring committee members, Brian Lawrence, John Pennington and Ron While, were all re-elected for a further 3 years. In the absence of any other nominations there is a vacancy for one other on the committee.

Following the conclusion of the business members were treated to a fascinating talk and demonstration of lovespoon carving by the local carver, Ralph Hentall.

## APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

Subsequent to the AGM the officers were appointed for another year with Brian as chairman and Isobel as treasurer. Pat Shenard continues as minute secretary. We still have no secretary but these duties will be shared by the committee members until better arrangements can be made.

## MEMBERS' MEETINGS

Your committee is endeavouring to prepare a programme of meetings but without suggestions from you it is difficult to know which way to go. Frank Clayton will try to arrange visits for small groups to the County Records department at Hertford. If you are interested reserve your place - it will be 'first come, first served'. Ron Kingdon is to be approached regarding another slide show of local interest.

## DH APPRENTICES' EXHIBIT AT SCIENCE MUSEUM

Dennis Jenner writes "The Smithsonian Institute in Washington disputed the Wright brothers' claim to have permanent loan to the Science Museum in carried out the first manned powered flight. The brothers therefore gave their original machine on perLondon. About 1943 the American government asked for the aircraft to be returned to the Smithsonian. This was done, but before the hand over, a replica was made in the de Havilland Apprentices Training School at Astwick Manor. Hatfield. The Science Museum have confirmed the details and it is the replica which they now have on display."

## FORGOTTEN SOUNDS OF OLD ROE GREEN

by Mary Padget

First published in Hertfordshire Countryside 1993

The ear has a good memory. The first time we walked along Roe Green Lane in 1937 in search of a house to buy my eyes could not find what my ears could hear. The drone of a single aeroplane - a Gypsy Moth. biplane - high, in the clouds. That sound had been a very rare thrill indeed where I had lived up north, but here we had de Havillands less than half a mile away. We found the right house and when my parents came to visit they'd even leave their meal on the table and run outside when they heard the sound of a plane and scan the sky to find it.

The house we bought was right near to Hazelgrove and from the open window one quiet evening - wasn't it always quiet in Roe Green in 1937? - I heard my very first nightingale. I longed to see it. "Why not try" we said, "if we hear it again?" The next night we did just that. We crossed the field (now full of Hatfield Polytechnic) and tiptoed through the grove till the trilling sound led us to a coppiced hornbeam. Such an ordinary bird to produce such exquisite song! We could see its open beak and the vibration of its throat. Only a few more evenings like that and then we listened from the window in vain and we haven't heard a nightingale since. Houses and college have eaten into our hazelgrove. But we did still have the owls from there to hoot from high in the beech trees - so many of which were sadly cut down when building began. A rarer and more disturbing sound was the raucous alarm noise from an ambulance in those days. When we heard it from the house it seemed to summon us to run to see what had happened usually up on the Comet bridge. The up and down wail of the modern ambulance is, unfortunately, not rare enough to have that effect on us. We just sigh and say "Someone's in trouble somewhere. Hope it isn't serious." Bells were much more common. I think most of the Roe Green people rode bicycles and, as our lane then had twists and turns and no footpaths

for walkers, a bell on the handlebars was a necessity.

A new bicycle bell was often a birthday present received with delight. The Wall's "Stop me and Buy one" ice-cream tricycle had a very tempting call of its own. So did the big bell on top of Roe Green's "Tin Chapel" on Sundays. And the bell that hung over the door of Lil's lock-up sweet shop had a delightful ting-a-ling that added to the pleasure of buying sweets over the counter. The Hatfield to St. Albans train (long since axed) stopped at Nast Hyde Halt and we could hear the clickety clack on the rails from our garden. When Farmer Hill had a delivery of sheep from Scotland they were brought via Hatfield station to Nast Hyde to be shepherded by Arthur Bray up Watery Lane and behind our houses to the field. The baa-baa baaing as they bunched past our back gates brought us running up the garden with our children to watch. It pleased us more than do the slamming doors of students' cars now, parking nose to tail outside our front garden hedges. One of the first things we did on moving to Roe Green was to buy a dozen laying hens and a cockerel. So, like many of our neighbours, we had our farmyard noises at the end of our garden, with early morning cock crow and the intermittent clucking of hens announcing "I've laid an egg for your tea."

Right opposite we had Mr. Prior's horse "Golden Boy" neighing in his stable on the allotments (now gone wild) and Rube Skeggs' pigs squealing in the pig sty.

Of course our tranquility was soon disturbed by the dreaded sound of warning sirens, which we are pleased to forget, and the constant sound of increasing traffic, the head piercing noise of motor bikes, the portable transistor radios, the pneumatic drills on constant road work which are not exactly harmonious or heart-warming.

How can we, now the longest living residents, not sigh deep sighs for the long past sounds of Old Roe Green.

A former Hatfield resident is anxious to acquire a copy of "Hatfield and its People, Part 4, Newgate Street in order to complete the set. He has duplicate copies of Parts 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 11a, 12 and the Short Pictorial History for sale. Anyone who has a copy of Part 4 for sale or wishes to purchase any of the other parts please contact Brian Lawrence for further details.