

HATFIELD THIS CENTURY

Hatfield People Explore Their History Since 1900

No. 24

NEWSLETTER

March 1997

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Editorial

Your committee has been considering the possible activities for 1997. At the committee meeting in February it was reported that of 75 members 60% have sent in their subscriptions, many with seasonal greetings and a few with other messages of interest. It is encouraging to receive comments on activities, projects, newsletter articles etc., but it is felt that so much information and so many memories are being lost for want of recording. Many local people have taken part in the oral history project, run in conjunction with the museum and others have indicated that they are willing to be interviewed. But we need more interviewers. The equipment is available and Sue Kirby is prepared to teach the art of interviewing. For those people who are apprehensive regarding facing a microphone, a pen and paper or typewriter would be perfectly acceptable to record your memories. Don't worry about grammar or spelling, these new fangled machines take care of that! Your contribution could be used as an article in the newsletter, collated with others as a pot-pourri of information or - for the more ambitious - publications such as the Hertfordshire Countryside or Hertfordshire's Past are always prepared to put them in print. Let's see what we can do!

The Workhouse

Arrangements have been made for a talk on the Poor Law and Workhouses to be given by the County Archivist, Dr. Kate Thompson, on the 8th October next.

The specific local interest of course will be the Union Workhouse which later became the Wellfield Home for elderly Ladies, until its demolition.

It is requested that we carry out some research on this building and its use to supplement the talk.

I will be pleased to collect any information from members and pass it on before the meeting.

The Lone Star

What memories are evoked by the thought of all the various toys produced by the Die Cast Machine Tool Co. at their works in Hatfield and Welham Green. It is hoped to arrange a talk later this year with examples of the products. This will probably be mainly concerned with the Welham Green plant but members may contribute their memories of the Hatfield works and any samples of the products they still have.

Should any member feel inclined to lead a project on the Hatfield site, please let us know.

HatFest 1997

The festival will be held between Sunday 1st June and Carnival day, Saturday 7th June. Your committee has decided not to take part in the carnival proceedings this year but will provide an illustrated talk during the week. Details of subject, venue and time are not available at the time of going to press.

Publications

Brian Lawrence's book "Hatfield at War" has been a complete sell out. Hang on to your copy it will be a collector's item as no more are available.

"The Origin of Hatfield Street Names" was reprinted and well over 100 copies have been sold. A few are available from the editor as above.

Gladys Brown's "Walk Around Old Hatfield" is available from the Hatfield Library or from the author.

"The Mill Green Trail" has been written and illustrations are being collected. Sue Kirby has this in hand and has had a preliminary costing. Details of the publication date will be made known as soon as possible.

Letters...

Has any progress been made on the Walks Around Hatfield? If anyone volunteers for the Roe Green area I will help but am unable to do it on my own.

Gladys Brown.

Unfortunately no, but we live in hope of offers. Ed,

I enclose my subscription. Thank you for keeping us in touch.

Given time to prepare, I would be willing to talk on the Tingey family shops, grocery etc.

Janet Robinson, (nee Tingey)

Thank you Janet for your kind offer. We will be in touch but the arrangements could be complicated.

(Janet lives now in Herefordshire and runs the area Bed & Breakfast Group.

Interesting Folk

Some time ago there was a suggestion that we include "thumbnail word sketches" of interesting past local residents. No contributions were sent at the time but we could resurrect the idea. Here is one that I have come across.

William Sheppard

At the beginning of the century Bill Sheppard worked as a blacksmith on the railway. His smithy was behind the site of the horse trough on the Great North Road opposite the Red Lion. The children used to take their iron hoops to him for repair. He lived in the "Odd Cottage" which was situated at the junction of Briars Lane and St. Albans Road close to the entrance to Galleycroft. (*Now the site of the Swim Centre*) The cottage was demolished in the 1930s. About 1910 Bill Sheppard moved to one of Mrs. Higgs' cottages in the First Right of Way. He died in 1940.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will take place at
OXLEASE DAY CENTRE
on Tuesday 20th May 1997 at 8 pm

Followed by a talk on
THE WORK OF THE HATFIELD AND DISTRICT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

by
WENDY PARRY Assistant Curator Mill Green Museum

One Hundred Years of Record Keeping in Hertfordshire

The County Record Office at County Hall, Hertford looks after many documents relating to the whole county from 1060 AD (before William the Conqueror) to yesterday. Items of particular interest to Hatfield historians include the Quarter Session Rolls and Workhouse records.

Parish Registers are not in the Record Office and the archives of the Marquises of Salisbury are held at Hatfield House.

The first meeting of the committee to consider the question of County Records was held in 1895. The Hertfordshire County Council was one of the first, along with Bedfordshire and Middlesex, to address the question of its records.

Although the records of the County Council now only account for 20% of the Record Office holdings, from 1920 onwards privately owned records have been accepted for deposit.

Like all Record Offices, Hertfordshire's popularity has grown, from only 12 visits in 1935 to many thousands per year in the 1990s. The vast majority of searchers now are family or local historians. Others are school or college students and people needing access to records for

practical purposes such as Rights of Way, school attendance records or details of adoption.

Adjoining the Records Office is the Local Studies Library, containing a wealth of details accessible to the public. Many maps, gifts and souvenirs are available from the Record Office.

Frank Clayton has been negotiating with Dr. Kate Thompson, our County Archivist to arrange a conducted visit to the Office. A group of about 20 members could be accommodated at a time and date to be agreed. Initially we would need to know who would be interested. Details with possible transport arrangements can be sorted at a later date.

Write to me, or phone, at the above address if you would like to be included in the party. Ed.

St. Albans Line

Forty people attended the talk by Ron White on the History of Hatfield Railway on the 12th March. This most interesting afternoon prompted considerable discussion with requests for further information on other sections of the Hatfield line.