

EDITOR: F.J.Cox

Annual General Meeting

Fifteen members attended this meeting on the 20th May at Oxlease House, Travellers Lane.

The Chairman, Brian Lawrence, reported that the committee had met six times during the year. Two members meetings had been very successful and the seminar on the Hatfield and District Archaeological Society had been well received. The Newsletter had been produced and circulated each quarter.

The Group had been represented at the 1996 Hatfield Festival and the St. John's Xmas Fair. The book on Street Names had proved popular and Gladys Brown's Old Hatfield Trail had been published. Work is continuing on the Mill Green Trail and it is hoped to publish shortly.

An October meeting is planned as is also a visit to the Hertford County Record Office. Brian hoped that the Group will contribute to the Hatfield 98 celebrations.

With the approach of the millennium some thought will have to be given to the name of the Group. New life and energy must be attracted if it is not to wither away before the year 2000.

Financial Report

The Treasurer, Isobel Cox, reported on another successful year with the main income being from subscriptions and the sale of Street Names. The balance in the bank included a £150 grant obtained by the Mill Green residents towards the cost of their trail leaflet.

We currently have 68 paid up members. Thanks were extended to Maurice and Heather Richardson for their work in auditing the accounts.

Election of Committee Members

Stan Huckle had resigned as a member of the committee due to family commitments. Thanks are extended for his support and it is hoped to see him at future meetings.

Frank Cox and Reg. Coleman had finished their term of office but indicated their willingness to stand again.

Stan. Clayton was nominated for the committee and together with Frank and Reg. were unanimously elected as members of the committee.

The meeting ended by Wendy Parry talking about HADAS which provoked considerable interest and comment. More of this at a later date.

Listen ***to the stories of Hatfield*** ***told by Hatfield people***

Over the years the Mill Green Museum, later supported by Hatfield This Century, has been instrumental in recording oral interviews relating to matters of interest locally.

These recordings are stored in the museum and are maintained as part of the history of the area. As one of the projects undertaken by Hatfield This Century, these interviews have been copied and edited for use by the general public. We are pleased to be able to announce that the first batch of tapes have been catalogued by the Hatfield Library and are now available on loan.

Seventeen tapes covering thirty two interviews have been deposited in the reference section of Hatfield Library under the Local History section. These may be obtained on loan with a normal library ticket. This first batch of recordings mainly cover memories of Newtown and the de Havilland Aircraft Company and were essential to the projects which resulted in the booklet of "Hatfield's First New Town" and the exhibition "The Engine of Change".

Great Nast Hyde House

by Brian Lawrence

Abridged from Hertfordshire Countryside Feb. 1997

The precise date of construction of Great Nast Hyde House is not known but it must have been between 1598 and 1625 putting it among other nearby mansions such as North Mymms House and Hatfield House. It is an interesting example of its period and few changes have been made over the centuries.

The house is a two storey building with an attic and has mullioned and transomed windows, a lantern turret and a double storey porch on the south side. The chimney stacks, which have been restored to retain their original appearance, consist of octagonal sided shafts with splayed bases and moulded caps. The turret alongside of the central stack is thought to have held a beacon which served to guide travellers across Colney Heath at night.

The south porch presents a much more imposing picture than the rather undistinguished front entrance. The reason for this is that the south side of the house was originally the front entrance - something it has in common with Hatfield House.

The interior of the house has several interesting features. In the hall there remain some pieces of 17th century panelling and an Adam fireplace surround - one of a number which adorn the house. At the end of the main corridor there is a 17th century oak door which still bears its original latch and long strap hinges of the period. Probably the most noteworthy piece of craftsmanship is the exquisite main staircase. For much of the 16th century the law, prevented oak trees from being cut down for use in house building since the timber was required for the construction of ships. The result was that many

of the houses of that period which had oak staircases obtained the timber from old ships. Such is the case at Great Nast Hyde whose solid oak staircase was carved from the starboard companionway and bridge deck of one of these ships.

Over almost 400 years Great Nast Hyde has been the home of many different families as owners and tenants. Although it has not been possible to establish who the first owner of the house was it seems likely that it was built by the Oxton family who had acquired their wealth from the malting trade. It is known that Phillip Oxton was the owner in 1642.

The property was passed on to other members of the family over the following 40 years but in 1682 the estate was acquired by Robert Kentish. It remained in the ownership of several generations of the family over the next century although records show that it was let to a tenant, J. Hedach, in the 1750s. By the 1790s William Cannon was the tenant and he became the owner in 1800. On his death fourteen years later the estate, which now amounted to 268 acres, was inherited by his son, also William Cannon. Much of the land lay to the north of the house on the other side of the present St. Albans Road. The fields were mostly small and some land was still farmed in strips. When the estate was auctioned in 1843 on Cannon's death the land was described as being "in a high state of cultivation".

A gentleman by the name of H. O. Kidman became the owner but in 1861 Richard Clark from Buckinghamshire had taken it over and was maintaining the farm with a

staff of eight men, two boys and three women.

It was during this period that the Hatfield to St. Albans railway line was built a short distance south of the house. In 1880 the estate passed into the hands of the Hart-Dyke family who extended the west end of the house and reduced the acreage to about 30.

Lionel Janson acquired the property in 1923 and two years later Major Burton became the owner. It was requisitioned by the government during the war and purchased by the de Havilland Aircraft Company in September 1946 for use as a venue for corporate hospitality. So it continued until British Aerospace left the site some four years ago.

It would be a bonus if the house could be made accessible to the public on occasions so that they could enjoy its many fine features.

A letter in The Independent of 23 March 1995 talks of a Mrs. Barbara Macdonald's mother living in Great Nast Hyde c1934 and commissioning the building of "Torilla" next door into which she moved about 1939. Ed.

Letters

David Willson suggests that the colloquial name - Duck Lane - for Park Street could have been a corruption of "Viaduct Lane", i.e. viaduct - duct - duck. Any other comments?

One member remembers working at Wellfield Home, no memories of Lone Star have arisen.

Where are all those stories of days gone by?