

SECRETARY: Mrs. C. Martindale  
EDITOR: F.J.Cox

## *Editorial.....*

Firstly, apologies regarding the cancelling of the December meeting due to the closure of the Swim Centre. It was not possible to notify everyone of the situation but we hope that the word was spread sufficiently so that nobody had a disappointed journey.

Thanks to our contributors supplying topical articles we have been able to offer a bumper edition this time. This could become a regular four page feature if sufficient stories, letters and articles were forthcoming. Articles on old Hatfield and Newtown are gratefully received but we do not seem to hear anything much about South Hatfield. All you members who contributed to Boom Time must surely have some interesting tales to tell and much as you dislike the idea of getting older your stories are now part of the recent history of Hatfield. The de Havilland story is a major item of local history, but what about the people who did not work there - their stories need to be told. So come along, put your memories on paper and share them with us all.

The Resources Room at Mill Green Museum is available to anyone researching the locality. It is open on Thursday mornings for visitors without prior appointment. At present only about three volunteers are available to share this duty and we sorely need more. If you could spare a couple of hours or so, come along and see how interesting it can be. Your local knowledge could make you an expert and you could meet some most interesting people.

## HATFIELD PARK

Remembered by  
Brian Lawrence

The closure of Hatfield Park recently following the imposition of restrictions to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease, led me to reflect on the value of this facility for me and for so many others throughout the many years I lived in the town. I know that in normal circumstances it still is a great asset to local residents, particularly those living in the 'Old Town', and still offers a full programme of events ranging from Concerts to Craft Fairs, Festivals of Gardening, Antiques Fairs and numerous other diverse activities. However, due to changes in society, these attractions now appeal to audiences from a much wider area whereas in former times most of the events held in the Park or in the grounds of Hatfield House were geared chiefly towards the local community.

My earliest recollections of the Park go back to the end of the Second World War when we went there as a family to celebrate VE Day, and I believe VJ Day, with bonfire parties. Although these are my earliest recollections of the Park I understand that my first visit was at the age of three months when I was taken by my mother to a garden party of all the Estate tenants to celebrate the Golden Wedding of the Fourth Marquess and Marchioness of Salisbury.

In the early post-war years there were regular fetes in the grounds of the House usually held on Bank Holidays, I seem to recall. These fetes attracted large crowds and gave local residents

the chance to see those secret parts of the Park such as the maze and the lake. My lasting memory of these occasions is a fancy dress competition at one of the fetes where I went along in a most uncomfortable costume dressed as Mr. Therm (the Gas Board's emblem) and came away jubilant having won third prize, 2s.6d (12.5p).

In earlier times the Park was even more important to the local population serving as their major location for recreation and community activities, since many of them were either associated with the Estate as employees and tenants or lived in the immediate surroundings. For many years up to the outbreak of the Second World War the Hertfordshire Show was held in Hatfield Park and this must have caused great excitement in the town. A series of fairs and fetes held in the 1920s and 1930s were very elaborate events and involved a great deal of organisation by the local community. On Friday 30th and Saturday 31st May 1924, the Hatfield Elizabethan Fete in aid of the Hertfordshire Nursing Association was held in the Park and was attended on the Saturday by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York (the present Queen Mother). It seems slightly odd that the admission charge on the Friday was 5s.Od. (25p) whereas on the Saturday when the Royal visitor attended it was reduced to 1s.6d. (7.5p)! The fete opened with an historical procession with characters dressed as King James I and members of his court, followed by a masque, dramatic

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## **HATFIELD PARK**

performances, a Japanese play, Country and Grecian Dancing. A Market Place was erected together with a Village Green complete with stocks and a whipping post, and an old English Fair. In addition the House and the maze were open to the public and there was boating on the lake.

In Coronation Year, 1937, on August Bank Holiday, *An Elizabethan Pageant & Dickens Fair* was held and created quite a stir. The first episode of the pageant, set in 1588, opened with trumpets heralding the defeat of the Armada and Good Queen Bess riding through the village bidding her subjects to rejoice. The second episode seemed rather loosely connected with the first in that it depicted a cricket match between Hatfield and the Pickwick Club complete with Mrs. Bardell and Mr. Pickwick. An attraction which had greater historical accuracy was ~ the tableau of the Princess in the Tower recreating the period of Elizabeth's 'partial imprisonment' in the Old Palace at Hatfield prior to her accession. The programme included an intriguing variety of sideshows. Along with the more recognisable stalls like darts and hoopla there were items such as 'Strung Leg Mutton', 'Kill the Rat', 'Bunty Pulls the String', 'Stella' the fortune teller and Mrs. Jarley's Waxworks. Music throughout the day was provided by the Luton Band and the festivities culminated with dancing in the evening on the South Front of Hatfield House.

The event must have proved to be a resounding success as a year later a similar format was used for the *Olde Englishe Fayre*. Many of the previous year's attractions were repeated but this time Children's Country Dancing, Bicycle Polo and an Ankle Competition were included and music was provided by the St. Albans City Prize Silver Band.

It is apparent that at the time of the Bank Holiday Fairs people were beginning to realise that Hatfield was experiencing significant developments which

would change the face of the town quite dramatically. In his foreword to the programme for both events the Rector, Pat Leonard, made reference to Hatfield's past and then went on to add 'it also has a future of that none can doubt, and therein lies the problem'. He made reference to the factory development across the 'great arterial By-pass road with its ceaseless hum of hurrying cars and lorries, where once were quiet fields and leafy lanes'. What would he be saying now as the redevelopment of the airfield swallows up more open land? He acknowledged the need for additional housing and services and the inevitability of the 'mushroom growth', stressing 'the crying need for a meeting place where the social life of the new community may find a natural centre'. He explained that Lord Salisbury had given a site and plans had been prepared for the building of a Church Hall and Community Centre to meet this need and called for the support of all those present at the Fair to bring this plan to fruition. The response must have been a very positive one as the new Memorial Hall in St. Albans Road, dedicated to the memory of a former rector, Lord William Cecil, was opened on 15th October 1938.

Of course, the outbreak of war brought a halt to most of the organised events in the Park, the House became a military hospital and the Home Guard used the Park for training exercises but it remained an attractive playground for local children. After a fall of snow it had special appeal as children of all ages hurried along through the main gates dragging their home-made sledges and headed for the Green Hill or Elephant Dell.

For many years the Park fulfilled a significant role in the sporting life of Hatfield as it was, until 1978, the home of the town's senior cricket club. Regular home fixtures on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the summer attracted large crowds of locals and intrigued overseas visitors to the House who had never before witnessed this weird and inexplicable game. Visiting

teams enjoyed playing in the picturesque setting even if they found it difficult coping with the steep slope down to fine leg and the problem of avoiding passing cars as they fielded on the short boundary alongside the road to the House. In fact records show that cricket matches were being played in the Park over 200 years ago but two of the most memorable encounters on this well-tended wicket were Charity Matches during the 1950s. The first of these in aid of the Hatfield Youth Centre Building Fund took place on Sunday 10th June 1956. Lord Salisbury's star-studded team included Middlesex and England players, Bill Edrich, (a Hatfield resident around that time), Jack Robertson, John Warr, Fred Titmus (later to become a Hatfield resident) and the charismatic Denis Compton together with his brother Leslie and John Murray (subsequently England's wicket keeper). They were joined by Viscount Kilmuir (Lord Chancellor), Earl de la Warr (Postmaster General) and Lord Balniel, the local MP. The opposition included county cricketers and the television personality Peter Haigh. Two years later, on 22nd June 1958, another Charity Match in aid of the National Playing Fields Association and Hatfield Parish Church Fabric Fund saw Lord Salisbury's XI, containing a similar, strong Middlesex contingent, face a Lord Taverners XI whose numbers included the entertainers, McDonald Hobley, William Franklyn and Peter Sellers.

This account illustrates some of the ways in which Hatfield Park has played an important role in providing facilities for the enjoyment of the community during the 20th century. Other former and present residents of the town will, no doubt, have other recollections and fond memories. Let us hope that whatever development takes place over the coming years, residents and visitors will continue to be able to enjoy the diverse attractions that the Park has to offer.

**HYDE FARM**H.J. (John) Gray

The response "Hyde Farm" in the September 2001 Newsletter to Mrs Sims of Much Wenlock enquiry about the whereabouts of the farm in Hatfield Hyde makes mention of West Hyde Farm.

Thanks to research by Henry W Gray, MVQ, Hatfield's Parish Clerk, and information supplied by Robin Harcourt Williams, MA, Librarian and Archivist to the Marquess of Salisbury, I am able to say my great-great-great-grandfather, John Gray, was the tenant of West Hyde Farm in the 1820's-1830's.

Shortly after the death of the 1st Marquess of Salisbury in 1823 the property was bought by the 2nd Marquess from Cecilia, the widow of Samuel Robert Gaussen, the younger, of Gobions, the Brookman's Park estate. John Gray was the sitting tenant of "the farmhouse, orchard, etc., and land called Two Acres", the latter being one of the fields on the farm. Two Acres was not applied to the farmhouse nor to the whole farm which in Gascoyne-Cecil Estates records is usually called "the farm at the Hyde" or "Gray's farm at the Hyde".

West Hyde was one of the smallest of Lord Salisbury's estates. In addition to Two Acres there were 13 other pightles and parcels of land amounting to some 40 acres in total. Some, if not all, of the land is now the King George V playing field in Welwyn Garden City near to which there is the street named Graysfield whilst Two Acres is another postal address in Welwyn Garden City commemorating my forebear's occupation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

John Gray always struggled to make West Hyde a viable undertaking and had difficulty in keeping up with payment of his rents to Lord

Salisbury. He owed substantial amounts at Michaelmas 1826 and did carting, harrowing and other farm work for the Marquess who set recompense for John's labours against the money owing to him. His lordship also accepted some cash and gifts - probably livestock - for the rest.

The rent payable by John in 1828 was £47 a year for the farm and £5 for a cottage at The Hyde. This was sufficient to enable John to vote in the 1832 election for Three Knights of the Shire. The vote was not then secret and John placed his X in favour of Viscount Grimston, heir to the 1st Earl Verulam of Gorhambury, St Albans, who was a Tory and close friend of John's landlord, the 2nd Marquess.

By Lady Day 1838 arrears of rent owed by John had grown to £70 10s 0d and pressure was put upon him 'to pay without loss of time'. The rents were slightly reduced in 1839 and John remained in the farm until Michaelmas of that year. By then his lordship's steward had received applications from prospective new tenants of the farm. A possibility is the original lease may have expired in 1839 at which time John, unable to make the farm pay or to pay his rents, may have quit voluntarily. It is much more likely he had Hobson's Choice and was thereafter reduced to farm labouring until he died at Hatfield Hyde from nephritis in 1856 when aged 67.

It is thought the farm next passed to a family named Pickett in whose time religious services were held at 3 p.m. each Sunday in the kitchen, scullery and parlour when a Mr Robinson, a curate at Hatfield was in charge - see 'Hatfield and Its People'.

Widow Cecilia Gaussen who sold the farm to the 2nd Marquess was a daughter of William Franks of Beech Hill, Barnet. She was born on April 6, 1779. Her husband died in

1816 when he was only 28 years old, leaving the Gobions, Brookman's Park, estate to his 4 year old son, Robert William Gaussen, who held it for 64 years. On remarrying Cecilia had a daughter by her second husband, George Jacob Bosanquet of Broxbournebury.

It seems probable Cecilia was of the family of William Franks, MA, FRS, JP, of Woodside, Hatfield, who built Woodhill school. William was father of Captain William Franks (c. 1821-1879) of the Herts Militia and a barrister of the Inner Temple. In the 1850's Captain Franks became official private secretary to the 2nd Marquess of Salisbury, owner of West Hyde Farm.

Captain Franks, like his father, became a JP and Deputy Lieutenant of Hertfordshire. He was a good cricketer who played for Hatfield and Hertfordshire XI's in the 1840's. In a cricketing context it is not impossible that Cecilia's second husband was of the family of B J T 'Bose' Bosanquet who played cricket for Oxford University, Middlesex and England and introduced the 'googly' delivery to the game.

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**BIRCHWOOD  
MILLENNIUM LOOP**

The Birchwood Residents Association has recently completed their millennium memento. Entitled The Birchwood Millennium Loop it consists of a flat leisurely walk of 2.2 kilometers with wheelchair access and exits. It was officially opened by Mrs. Wenham, chair of Hatfield Town Council on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August. The Local History Society have been pleased to be associated with this and with the production of the guide with historical notes.

**Letters .....***Southall  
Middlesex*

I am trying to find the grave of Robert Brian Randell age 1 month, of 11, Ellenbrook Lane who died 21 September 1939. He died at Oster House, St. Albans. Any information will be gratefully received.

*Alan Sabey***TORILLA**

Thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Charlton the owners of the house, members have had the opportunity of visiting Torilla over the past two years. Mr. Charlton has advised us that there will be a further chance to do so at a date, yet to be decided, in the spring/summer of 2002. If anyone is interested in making such a visit they should contact Brian Lawrence on 01727 857945 who will ensure that they are informed of the time and date as soon as the information is available.



The Propeller Post  
Sheet metal sculpture designed and created by Anna Bisset.  
Start point for the Birchwood Millennum Loop



**Seasonal  
Greetings**  
To all  
our  
members  
and their  
families

**MEETINGS 2002**

Monday 11 February 2.30pm

**The History  
And Restoration  
Of a  
Tudor Farmhouse**

*Dr. Gillian Gear*

Monday 8 April 2.30pm

**Hidden Hertfordshire***Anne Marie Parker*

Monday 11 March 7.30pm

**Hatfield House Gardens  
And the  
Tradescant Connection**

*Polly Bishop*

Monday 13 May 7.30pm

**AGM followed by  
Those You Have Loved -  
Hatfield's Lost Buildings**

*Dr. Eric Sherrard*