

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

Editorial.....

○ Once again we are grateful to those members who have sent in items for inclusion in this Newsletter.

Dennis 'Doc' Watson kindly agreed to allow the extract from his book, "When Coppers Carried Capes." Although now out of print a copy is held in the reference section of the library and we hope to include further extracts in future Newsletters.

Following the publication of "The Life and Times of William George Walby" lots of memories of Newtown have been revived and may well be used as infill snippets as started on page 4. If you have memories of events, personalities or occurrences please put pen to paper and share them with us.

We have been very fortunate in persuading Mary Padgett to permit us to compile some fifty plus articles which she has written for the Church and national magazines into another publication with, most generously, any proceeds being donated to the Society to support our aims of recording local history. The final draft is subject to approval before submission to the printer. To allow us to print a viable number you are requested to order your copy quickly.

BEFORE I JOINED THE FORCE

by 'Doc' Watson

Whenever I sit down at the computer I seem to write a story of the old days in the Force or some notes on conversations with my old friends who sit with me at lunch time and, let me add, are older than I am. One of them born during the Boer War, which is going back a bit.

That preamble is all by the way because I watched a Country File programme a day or two ago and wondered how many of today's young folk could remember the time when no village was complete without its Blacksmith, the Saddler and, within two or three miles, the Wheelwright.

As a young news gatherer, before I joined the Force, I covered the catchment area of our 'Local' weekly paper and that involved cycling out to about a dozen villages to collect the interesting happenings for the page of gossip from round-about. You know the sort of thing, Best Kept Village, Tug of War, Darts League, Church Fetes, the lot. To do this I must see the Parson, who as usual is out drinking tea, so I collected the tales from his good lady whilst drinking the tea he should have been consuming. The Smith and the Wheelwright were usually a combined effort, the Wheelmaker constructing the wheels as they have been doing for about 3,000 years, bow-sawing the pieces of rim, shape the felloes with the draw-knife, cut the sockets in the hub and finally assemble the wheel for the Smith to make the

tyre or, to be correct, the tire of those days and the small rings for each end of the hub. As I finished putting the above on screen, I looked out of the window and there was my young friend the Forester, well young from where I am standing. I could see he was marking out wooden name plates to be spindle moulded, so I opened the window and hailed him. "I am busy" he shouted, but he came over anyway. I threw the paper of the first saga over to him "Find fault with that" I told him. "You haven't told them about turning the hub". "On the Pole Lathe?" I looked down the paper, "I haven't, I will do it now". I must tell you that he is forty years younger than I am and does not always see eye-to-eye with me. In the old days a large sapling was buried at forty degrees with the thin top over the lathe pulley. A rope from the top of the pole went down round the wide driving pulley on a the pedal. A press with the foot and you took a shaving off, up went the pole, down went the pedal and so ad infinitum. Matey said "That went out with the ark, we had a boy turning the handle on a big cast iron wheel, that took a bit of starting, but when he got up to speed it would have thrown him through the roof if he wasn't careful". I wonder how he knows so much about it, do you think he may have been the boy he mentioned? After all, pennies were scarce half a century ago. "How about coppicing?" (Cutting

out the centre of a young tree so that a number of young branches grow all about the same size, for hurdle making.) "Not much nowadays, funny thing though, the toff land-owners are turning back to the natural hurdle fence, they look right somehow and cheaper than iron fences. The Farriers nowadays go round in an old lorry and take their anvil and small forge with them, you know, every Monday here and every Tuesday somewhere else. There has to be a wheelwright about, but very few I reckon, even the gypsies have old car wheels on their carts. "Coopers?" He shook his head "All the beer is in drums nowadays, there must be one or two making garden tubs I suppose, but I doubt they get fat on it". He added "When I was in the south they used to sell a 'Camp' to the travellers. All the trees in a square were marked with a white blaze and could be used for gates, hurdles or clothes pegs even, while the timber lasted, but that was a good few years ago".

There are one or two charcoal burners down Sussex way. I know one who had a nice little business but I doubt he could stand much competition. My tree man, who has the job of planting about two thousand Christmas trees each year, who loves all his little woodland friends and spends his time caring for his tiny bats, who live in the sheds and barns and are protected by him with barbed wire and so forth, are his passion, even taking them out and talking about them complete with slides, at my behest, to show the old and timid, how harmless they are. So he wandered off to work in wood the signs for the guidance of visitors to the Estate, to see the rabbits and the squirrels, and to miss the hundreds of little eyes watching anxiously to make sure the strangers keep going. All of this, of course proves one thing at least, that I also am a countryman born.

BROCKET HALL and the CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

In 1892 Earl Cowper let Brocket Hall and park on a seven year lease to Lord Mount Stephen. A Scot from Dufftown, George Stephen was born in 1829, but left Scotland at the age of 21 to seek his fortune across the Atlantic. He was responsible for the idea and the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company across the then undeveloped Canada. The railway expanded bringing wealth to its investors. Mines and saw mills sprung up along the tracks and Stephen became a millionaire.

In 1890 the Stephens returned and the following year he was elevated to the peerage. He chose the title "Mount Stephen", the name given in his honour to the highest point in the Canadian Rockies.

Previously Brocket Hall had been let for 10 years to a lady who had rather let it run down, but the Mount Stephens accepted the challenge and settled down to country life in Lemsford.

Four years later Lady Mount Stephen died and was buried in Lemsford churchyard. Lord Mount Stephen was distraught and kept her portrait in his study for the rest of his life.

Some time later the Duchess of Teck visited Brocket. Among her retinue was Miss Gian Tufnell, the daughter of a naval officer. The engagement of Lord Mount Stephen and Miss Tufnell delighted her friend the Duchess's daughter, Princess May.

The second Lady Mount Stephen's friend became the Princess of Wales and later Queen Mary wife of King George V. She was a frequent visitor at Brocket and on one of those occasions personally met May Moore (nee

Willmott) as remembered in May's memoirs.

Failing sight and acute deafness afflicted Lord Mount Stephen until he died at the great age of ninety two.

His own Canadian wagon, drawn by his own horses and driven by his coachman drove his body to the church where his own men carried him to his grave.

Fore Street, Hatfield

a brief survey by David King.

Fore Street consists of two rows of interesting buildings which date, in the main from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and are stepped up the hill leading to the church of Saint Etheldreda. The houses, many of a Georgian type, have been closely built and perhaps rather crowded onto sites which previously held more humble dwellings.

Often the facades of the buildings are rather newer than the backs and insides of the structures, e.g. No's 15-17 Fore Street. These have brick facades dating from the second half of the 18th century but behind these the greater part of the structure is 16th century.

Numbers 44 to 46, opposite, are three small timber framed houses built in the early 17th century. Two of the houses had fireplaces in the first floors which rather indicates that the rooms below were used as shops or for storage. Again, brick fronts were added to these buildings in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In the earlier part of this century and previously, Fore Street contained a large number of inns, a

residue of the days when the Great North Road ran through Hatfield Park. These included the East India Chief at the top of Fore Street, the Green Man and its small brewery run by John Searancke, a relative of the famous brewing family of Essendon and Hatfield, and also the Kings Head where Hodges' shop now stands on the junction of Fore Street and Church Street. The only building now used as an inn is the timber framed and gabled Eight Bells Inn at the bottom of Fore Street on the Park Street side. This dates from the 17th Century and has been identified with the hostelry in Hatfield where, in Dickens' "Oliver Twist", Bill Sykes stopped briefly on his flight from London.

The dwellings in Fore Street have undergone much change and conversion. As recently as 1910-1930, F.W. Speight, connoisseur of Georgian Architecture, was restoring and improving buildings in Hatfield using genuine Georgian material taken from buildings elsewhere. He is known to have lived in No. 3 Fore Street (Goodrich House) for a period and worked on its interior and garden. Speight's work was most skilfully carried out and is very difficult to differentiate from the original native Georgian.

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MEETINGS 2002

Monday 8 April 2.30 pm

HIDDEN HERTFORDSHIRE

Ann Marie Parker

Monday 13 May 7.30 pm

HATFIELD'S LOST BUILDINGS

Dr. Eric Sherrard

PORTHLEVEN

By Ron Kingdon

Jenny Wilson and her husband David left Ridge, near South Mymms, in 1964 and moved to Old Hatfield. At the end of the Old Hertford Road, there were two semi-detached cottages named 1 Stanton Cottages and Standon Cottage. It is believed that they were built about 1910/1911 by Lord Salisbury for workers on his estate. Jenny and David bought No. 1 Stanton Cottages freehold from his Lordship and renamed it "Porthleven" in memory of their Cornish honeymoon.

On moving in they found it very sparse with only two gaslights downstairs, oil lamps or candles upstairs in the three bedrooms with a four inch square lantern containing an old type cycle lamp powered by an '800' cycle battery for illumination in the hall. There was one cold water tap and a W.C. off from the kitchen. The cottage itself was well constructed with solid oak beams and one inch tongued and grooved floor boards, with ceilings of Essex board and battens. It was on main drainage. Jenny recalls it had a nice glass porch with a vine growing in front of the house.

With finances being rather restricted after the purchase they bought second hand furniture and remember on one occasion bringing home a table on top of their car in pouring rain. When one day the vicar called to see them he had to sit in a deck chair in front of the fire.

Although David's occupation was with insurance he set out to install part central heating and electricity. To enable him to do this he studied books, D.I.Y. magazines and learned all he could about the subject to be able to carry this out. They eventually had a bathroom and a Baxi gas fire. Jenny recalls sitting in the bath and watching

the traffic go by on the Hertford Road. Because of the toughness of the old oak timbers drills were often broken in tackling these for the installations. Being in a dip the noise from vehicles on the main road would pass overhead leaving the surroundings comparatively quiet.

The previous occupant had been a gardener from Hatfield House Estate and the last seven feet of the rear garden was laid out as an orchard containing some forty eight apple trees of various varieties, they were probably small cordons. The couple moved to the new Hertford Road area in 1976 but found their new residence to be not so well built as was the cottage and being on higher ground it was a noisier environment. They had made such a good job of the renovation of "Porthleven" that the first day it came on the market a viewer fell in love with it and bought it.

"A Walk Through Ridge" written by Jenny Wilson tells the story of the village remembered by her father. It is available from Willyotts Museum, Potters Bar at £2.50 with proceeds to the upkeep of Ridge Church.

War in Hertfordshire

A look at the First and Second World War and its effect on the local community is the subject of an exhibition at Mill Green Museum from Saturday 23 March to Sunday 14 July.

Exhibits include:

- ◆ Items from German airship shot down at Cuffley in 1916
- ◆ Military uniform, utility clothing and furniture
- ◆ Gas masks
- ◆ War time Murphy radio

Free entry

THE FORGE MUSEUM AND VICTORIAN COTTAGE GARDEN

Much Hadham

We hope to arrange a visit to this museum on the afternoon of Monday 10th June 2002.

Entry to the museum and to the 16th century wall paintings with a talk by the Curator will be followed by a guided village walk.

To coincide with the Golden Jubilee celebrations an exhibition, 'Celebrating Royalty', will also be shown.

The cost will be £2.50 per person. Before finalising details we need to know how many people would like to go on this outing. Transport arrangements need to be made, so please complete the attached slip and return it to Chris. as soon as possible.

THE FINAL JOURNEY

On the 11th February 1952 the funeral train of the late King George VI left Kings Lynn in Norfolk for its journey to King's Cross in London, hauled by a specially chosen Pacific Britannia British Railways Standard Class 7 locomotive No. 70000. The train was made up of ex L.N.E.R. teak coaches with a first class saloon painted black for the occasion, carrying the coffin. The train passed through Hatfield station around 2 pm with many residents watching from the platform and along the line side to pay their last respects

Who remembers this solemn occasion?

The king had died on the 6th February 1952 and his eldest daughter, Princess Elizabeth automatically became queen on that day.

Ron. Kingdon

Newtown Snippets

Mrs. Andrews kept the small shop from which Bill Walby would have bought five Woodbine cigarettes for 2d. The shop was later kept by Mrs. L. Emerton whose husband, Ralph, was the porter at the Workhouse. Ernest Savill, a postman, used sheds at the back of the shop for storage purposes. It is possible that he may have had the shop at some stage. Ernest Savill eventually opened a greengrocer shop and sub-post office in Newtown which Dollimore acquired when Savill retired to the west country.

William refers to houses next to the Gun Inn. The first one was named Ivy Cottage. It was Hatfield's first police station. It was occupied in Bill's early days by Mr. Jack Lockley who was a Benskins of Watford brewery representative. Jack Lockley was a Hatfield Rural District Councillor, a member of the Board of Guardians and a prominent townsman in several other respects, including his support of Hatfield United Football Club and Hatfield Lawn Tennis and Bowls Club. In recognition of his services Lockley Crescent was named after him.

W. Hulks' baker shop was acquired by the late Reginald Simmons from William Hulk's son William, who was a cousin of Reginald, the founder of the well known business of 'Simmons, bakers' of Hatfield.

In the fields on the left of French Horn Lane, Walter H. 'King' Humphreys, a dairyman at 'Goldings' used to graze his cows, Humphreys was succeeded by Frederick J. Hollier at the dairy which stood on the site of the present Holliers Court.

Letters

School Lane
Welwyn

We are a recently formed small group working on the history of the parish of Lemsford. Our aim is to have enough material to mount an exhibition in the church as part of the village Fete which takes place on Bank Holiday, Monday the 6th of May. The exhibition will probably remain in the church for a month or so after the fete. Longer term we hope to produce a history of the village plus Cromer Hyde. Photographs, newspaper articles and memories would be gratefully received.

Mary de Soyres

Worthing
W. Sussex

At the junction of Lemsford Road and Wellfield Road there was a firm making bricks. The Council used the hole they dug for their material for tipping their rubbish. Where the Hertford Road joined the Great North Road there was a water trough supplying drinking water for horses and dogs.

Bill Walby

(Now located outside Mill Green Museum and Mill. Ed.)

Birchwood Residents Association

Your help in the preparation of the Birchwood Millennium Loop booklet has been invaluable. It has now had its first run of printing and we have begun to distribute it to interested parties and others.

Harry Gibson
Secretary

Copies are available from various outlets including the Museum and Library and at our meetings.