

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

Editorial.....

At the last committee meeting it was reported that about 29 members attended the December social/slide show. The success of the afternoon was due to the application of Reg. Coleman and Jim Parker, who because of various circumstances were the only committee members in attendance. This situation cannot be sustained and unless we are able to recruit more active committee members the society could well be in danger of collapsing altogether.

It is appreciated that members have other commitments but just a few hours a month could make all the difference to the continuation of our thirteen years existence.

Will you agree to nomination to the committee at the next AGM?

Provisionally plans are going ahead for another Heritage Weekend this year but we must have more helpers.

The museum has suggested a Local History Day in June which could be an opportunity to let the general public become aware of our activities.

Thanks are due to Jim Page who has stepped into the breach at short notice to provide the programme for the April meeting. But please note this is not the second Monday in the month as usual but the third on this one occasion.

SO YOU THOUGHT NEW TOWNS WERE A MODERN IDEA?

An illustrated talk on Medieval New Towns In Hertfordshire By J M Page

Monday 19 April 2.30 pm

Jim Page, who was married to and evolution of towns. He was the late Mary Hickson, lived in an examiner for professional exams and was also, for some Hatfield in the 1950s. He was a town planner with Herts. CC. In years a member of the Urban the 1970s he became a full time Research Committee of the lecturer on town planning, with Council of British Archaeology. specialist interest in the history

FLY THE FLAG

Did you know there are 19 official days when the Union flag is to be flown from Government buildings from 8am to sunset?

Individuals, local authorities and other organisations may fly the Union flag whenever they wish, subject to compliance with any local planning requirement.

The 19 official occasions are:

- 20 January - Countess of Wessex's birthday
6 February - Her Majesty's Accession
19 February - Duke of York's birthday
1 March - St David's Day
10 March - Earl of Wessex's birthday
March - Commonwealth Day (second Monday)
21 April - Queen's birthday
23 April - St George's Day
9 May - Europe Day
2 June - Coronation Day
10 June - Duke of Edinburgh's birthday
June - Queen's Official birthday
15 August - Princess Anne's birthday
14 November - Prince Charles' birthday
November - Remembrance Day

- 20 November - Her Majesty's wedding day
30 November - St Andrew's Day
also on the day of the opening of Parliament and on the day of the prorogation of Parliament but only in the Greater London area.

Where the Union flag flies with another flag it takes precedence for instance on Europe Day the Union flag should be alongside the Europe flag but the Union flag takes precedence if there is only one flagpole.

Flags fly at half mast on the death of the Sovereign, the funeral of a member of the Royal family, funerals of foreign rulers and of Prime Ministers and ex Prime Ministers.

Just in case you didn't know the flag should be flown with the broader diagonal white stripe at the top left hand side of the flag nearest the flagpole.

REAL TENNIS

Following the interest aroused in this game resultant from the Heritage Open Day project it is felt that many members will be seeking more information about this specialist game which is still practised in the court at Hatfield House. We have been fortunate in locating the following article published in Hertfordshire Countryside in 1988 and acknowledge the source.

The origins of real tennis, the most ancient of ball games, are largely a mystery. Attempts have been made to link it with Homers 'Odessey'. an ancient Egyptian ritual and returning Crusaders but the most likely origin is suggested by the odd features of a real tennis court reminding one of cloisters of a monastery or the courtyard of a castle.

Real tennis is a mixture of lawn tennis and racquets though it is a far more subtle game than either. It is played in an indoor court with a net across the middle: but the ball is also played off the walls which contain a number of curious features or 'hazards'. Looking from the service side of the court (the two sides are different) the left hand wall is lined with "galleries", oblong openings about 1m high, There is a similar opening (the dedans) on the end of the service court. The walls of the court have internal walls built out from the main wall, a little over 2m high and with a sloping top (penthouse.). On the hazards side of the court there are two extra features in one corner: an extra section of wall, the tambour with a sloping edge nearest the net: and a square opening in the end wall next to it called the 'grille'.

The galleries and dedans (which in play are covered with netting so that spectators are safe) could be a

development from the rows of open arches in cloisters. The tambour resembles a buttress on a stone wall and the grille is like the grille of a confessional. European origin is suggested by the names of the features. They are French and it was in France that the game was probably developed and certainly made popular.

The game was popular with the clergy early on but was forbidden in 1245 by the Archbishop of Rothen. By that time though the first courts had been built outside monasteries. One is recorded outside Poitiers in 1230. In 1229 there were 13 professional tennis players on the Paris tax register and tennis had become popular with the nobility. Several French kings encouraged the game and Henri II who reigned in the 16th century was said to be the best player in France. Unfortunately the game was also unlucky for the French monarchy; Louis X caught a chill after playing it from which he died and Charles VIII was on his way to watch tennis when he cracked his skull on a low doorway and died from the blow. Phillip I of Spain also over exerted himself in a match and subsequently died.

In the 13th and 14th centuries the game spread from France and in England Chaucer spoke of it and Shakespeare wrote about it later on in Henry V when the French Dauphin sent an insulting box of tennis balls to the English King. In Shakespeare's day tennis was near its peak in popularity, actors often performing in tennis courts but gradually as plays became more popular tennis courts were turned into theatres.

Henry VIII's connection with the game is well known, he was a very keen player and had a court built

at Hampton Court Palace; the oldest court still in use today.

The game itself has evolved very little in 400 years. At first the ball was struck with the open hand but this gradually changed to a glove, then something very similar to a table tennis bat and short handled string rackets were in use in the 16th century. The 17th century tennis ball was stuffed with cloth or hair and covered with soft leather. Later the stuffing was made from tightly wound cloth strips tied with string and tied with a strong smooth white cloth. These days the ball is much the same although competitions are so rare that they are often hand made especially for the event. In the 19th century there was a mini revival of the game in Great Britain, the USA and Australia although by this time it was a game only for the very rich.

The game is highly complicated, skillful and difficult to understand and takes a great deal of practice to make a good player. England is the centre of the game today with about 15 courts including the one at Hampton Court and currently there is a revival of this ancient and skillful game.

Today there are only about 3,000 or so players in the whole world, simply because there are so few courts. It attracts high flying business men and those of the established families with distant regal connections and those involved in the sport are anxious to encourage those like minded people to become interested in this highly skillful and mentally absorbing game.

Lachlan Deuchar, British Open Champion 1988.

The Rules of Real Tennis

The court is divided by the net into two ends. The end from which the game is viewed by most spectators usually the dedans - is called the service end. The other end is the hazard end.

The serve is always delivered from the service end: and the ball must bounce at least once on the side roof (penthouse) on the hazard. If the first serve is a foul, a second is allowed.

Points are counted as in ordinary (lawn) tennis except that it is the score of the person who won the last point that is always called first. The first player to win six games wins the set.

Points are won when errors are made by the opposition (i.e. hitting the ball into the net or out of court).

They may also be won by striking the ball into one of the winning openings - the dedans, the grille or the winning gallery. If a ball enters any other gallery, 'chase' is set.

A chase occurs whenever a ball bounces twice on the floor at the service end before a player touches it.

The lines on the floor are there to measure the length of the chase from the back wall. For example. if the second bounce was on the 5-yard line then 'chase 5' has been set.

Chases can also occur at the hazard end but only if the second bounce is closer to the net than the service line. These are called 'hazard chases'.

The players change ends when there are two chases, or if there is one chase outstanding and the score is at game-point (eg 40 -15 or advantage).

Immediately after changing ends, the chase or chases are 'played off'. This means that the receiving player must hit his shots so that their second bounces are closest to the back wall than the chase being played (e.g. if the chase is 5 yards, he must play to 4, 3, 2 or one in order to win the point).

THE POOR OLD GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY

ONE of the early constituent companies of what British Railways called the Great Eastern Line was the Eastern Counties Railway. This company was one of the amalgamated companies forming the Great Eastern Railway, thence by way of the London and North Eastern Railway into B.R. (Eastern Region).

The poor (literally and figuratively) old Eastern Counties Railway was not a bright railway, and became a very favourite butt for the *Punch* of the day in satirical prose, verse and cartoon.

The story of the Great Eastern Railway is a very admirable success story; it was formed by an amalgamation of several smaller companies, some of which had been in the clutches of Hudson, the "Railway King," and all more or less in financial difficulties of some degree. The company itself, indeed, was in Chancery in 1867, and brief though its insolvency was it was only able to run services with locomotives and rolling stock not legally its own. There is still extant in the Wisbech museum a metal plate that was fixed to one of the locomotives, proclaiming to all the world that "This engine is the property of Alexander Tracy... William Booth... and John McMahon... and

the use thereof is rented of them by the Great Eastern Railway Company."

In its heyday, however, and even in L.N.E.R. days, the Great Eastern Railway was a prosperous company, running some of the fastest trains in the country in its continental and boat trains, giving the passengers good accommodation, and those who remember its clean blue engines sigh at today's filth and lack of imagination regarding colour schemes. Before the 1914-18 war it ran the most concentrated service of local steam trains ever known in the world, comparable with the best and better than most of today's underground electric services - this, of course, from the point of view of number of trains and moving the passengers, and not from the point of view of personal comfort and lighting.

I always think of the G.E.R. as "the poor old Great Eastern," a much-maligned railway, so much of it undeserved but no doubt some of it inherited from the Eastern Counties, for there is no question that to have known the Eastern Counties Railway must have been an education.

F.C.Olley

From HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTRY
SIDE Summer 1960

Forthcoming Meetings

19 April 2.30

Local Medieval New Towns
Jim Page

10 May 7.30

AGM Followed by
Hertfordshire Railway Accidents
Tom Doig



It is very difficult to find adequate words to express our sincere thanks for the kind words, beautiful cards, sympathy and support extended to Isobel since her unfortunate stroke last August and subsequently to myself and family following her sad death.

Remembering her consideration for, and assistance given to all who came into contact with her throughout her life and especially to friends and members of Hatfield Local History Society, she would be pleased to know that donations totalling £738.30, in lieu of flowers, have been sent to the Stroke Association in her memory to help with research into the cause and treatment of this affliction.

Thank you all very much
Frank Cox



Ron White

Another long standing member of the Society sadly passed away on 27 January at Isabel Hospice, Welwyn Garden City.

Ron was elected onto the committee in 1993 and applied his knowledge of the de Havilland company in the presentation of the "Engine of Change" exhibition.

His research into the St. Albans branch line culminated in one of the Society's most successful talks with standing room only. He was also an interviewer for the Oral History project.

Born in Hatfield, his local knowledge was a great source of information.

Ron will be sadly missed.

To most of us the trailing house-plant Tradescantia is a fitting memorial to a great man. His collection of curiosities formed the nucleus of the first public museum in Britain, at Lambeth. Later they were incorporated into the Ashmolean Museum, now at Oxford. Controversy surrounded the disappearance of Tradescant's name from the collection of rarities.

Tradescant, whose first important work was at Hatfield, later became gardener to King Charles I.

Originally published in "Hertfordshire Countryside" May 1968

JOHN TRADESCANT, GARDENER EXTRAORDINARY AT HATFIELD

John Tradescant came to Hatfield House in 1609. He was perhaps the greatest gardener then or now. He travelled extensively abroad with his son, also named John, collecting rare plants, many of the now commonplace plants in our gardens. He introduced mulberry and plane trees, bulbs of endless varieties, lilacs and acacias, vines and jasmine. Many of the varieties were brought from Belgium and Holland.

Several early records declared John Tradescant, the elder to be a Dutchman. He is quoted as "a great Dutchman" and "A Dutch garden expert at the time of James I.' His origins caused several disputes but it is now almost beyond doubt that he was of English stock.

At Hatfield, John Tradescant worked under the first Earl of Salisbury, advising on planting and laying out the gardens for the new Hatfield House. Unfortunately the first Lord Salisbury did not live to see the gardens or the house completed.

Preserved in the archives of the Marquess of Salisbury are the bills for plants, trees and seeds in Tradescant's handwriting. He faithfully recorded the details of his expenses and the wages paid to his garden labourers. Tradescant himself commanded about £12 a quarter as his wage.

He stocked the kitchen garden with vegetables and herbs. The paths were laid and trees and shrubs were planted. A further visit to the continent resulted in the introduction of new varieties of cherries, currants and pears into England, and these flourished in the soil of Hertfordshire. Furthering his connections with Hatfield, he

..... *Continued from last column*

rented land nearby from the second earl, William.

Records show that Stonecross Field, Thistle Field, Milkwell Field and Flaxland were leased by John Tradescant.

In 1615 he left Hatfield to work at Canterbury, but he is permanently remembered at Hatfield House. On the newel post at the top of the grand staircase a carving of a gardener with a rake is reputed to represent John Tradescant.

Continued in first column