

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2004

The AGM, held on the 10th May was well attended with 31 members being present.

Due to ill health Brian Lawrence had relinquished the office of chairman during the year and Reg Coleman, as vice-chairman, chaired the meeting.

Brian was invited to address the meeting and commented upon the society's successful progress since its inception in 1989. Highlights included the recording of oral history tapes, unfortunately ceased due to lack of interviewers, publications of booklets and Newsletters by Frank Cox and our popular meetings arranged by our secretary Chris Martindale. He concluded by appealing for more active committee members.

Reg spoke of the successful Heritage Open Day weekend which will be repeated again this year. He expressed gratitude to the Museum staff for their help and support and for the use of the facilities there.

Frank Cox, who had assumed the responsibilities of treasurer and membership secretary due to the sad death of Isabel, reported a membership of 105 and a healthy financial situation in spite of increased costs for room hire, photo-copying and a new third party insurance premi-

um of £52 per year. Thanks were expressed to Maurice and Heather Richardson for auditing the books and accounts.

Frank Clayton and Chris Martindale, having completed their three year term on the committee sought re-election and, with Tony Lodge a recently co-opted member, were unanimously elected. There had been no other nominations.

Subsequently at a very limited committee meeting the following officers were appointed:

Reg Coleman - Vice chairman
Frank Cox - Treasurer and Membership Secretary
Pat Sherrard - co-opted Minute Secretary.

Following the business a talk on Hertfordshire Railway Accidents was given by Mr. Tom Doig.

A HERTFORDSHIRE POULTRY YARD

Re-printed from "The Feathered World" May 20th 1892

"Come by all means, as early as you can; you will be able to see the birds, have dinner, and a drive round the country afterwards." So, or very similarly, ran an invitation which reached us just before Easter, and as it seemed at once to combine business and pleasure, we determined to utilise Saturday, April 16th, as one of the few days available for such an outing.

The morning came, and with it a surprise, for instead of the bright sunny day we had hoped for for our trip, the ground was white, and 'twas still snowing fast. The outlook did not seem promising either for seeing poultry or the country, but we decided on going, as things might mend; and fortune favoured us, for north of the Thames but little snow had fallen, and on arrival at Hatfield, where we were met by our friend, Mr. Sherriff, we found the weather was much better.

Our steps were first directed to Mr. Sherriff's house, which is in Hatfield proper, close to the station, and nestling snugly beneath the hill on which is built the great home of the Cecils. The farm, we were informed, was a

MUSEUM DATES

Tudor Celebrations
To celebrate the 25th birthday of the Museum opening to the public
Sunday June 27

Teddy Bear's Picnic
August 25

Lone Star Day
Sunday 19 September

little way off and we should drive there presently, as we were yet to be introduced to Messrs. W. and A. Sherriff, whom their father told us undertook the management of the poultry, as well as helping him in his extensive corn and coal business. The poultry round the house we were told not to look at; but we noticed some good pigeons - a fair pair of Runts, some Magpies, Pouters, and others, as well as a cheeky little Jackdaw, which, we understand, are the special fancy of Mr. Walter Sherriff, his younger brother, Mr. Arthur, taking more interest in the poultry. Whilst the horse was being put in we had a chat with our host about the prospects of the coming show at Hatfield, of which he is the energetic secretary, and found him very hopeful as to results, the people locally evidently taking a keen interest in it, and poultry and pigeons likely to be a good entry.

It was now time to start for the farm, and on being asked if we would like to go through the Park, we gladly assented; for, owing to the wanton mischief done by trippers and beanfeasters, Lord Salisbury has been forced, in self-defence, to close his grounds against all but a favoured few. Entering opposite the station, by the fine new gates of open ironwork, we drove up the slope, past the old Palace, now converted into stables and skirted the north side of Hatfield House, with its grand old Elizabethan front, and covered here and there with dark masses of ivy, harmonising well with its weather-beaten brick and stone work.

Leaving the house behind us, we drove down a long avenue of fine old elms and oaks (several, we were sorry to see, but ruins, still tended with such care that they promised to last for years yet) rousing on our way many a Pheasant and seeing in the distance numbers of deer who in this park, 11 miles in circumference, must enjoy almost perfect freedom. Reaching the lodge, the high road soon brought us to Mr. Sherriff's farm, and after a casual glance at the young stock in the yard we went out to see the poultry.

The houses and runs are situated in a field that slopes down to the river Lea, and the grass run attached to each house is of considerable extent, with the advantage of plenty of good running water always at hand. The time of our visit was unfortunate in one way, as Mr. Arthur Sherriff told us that only the previous week he had sold many of his best birds. Still, passing through rapidly, as time was going, we noticed Plymouth Rocks; some fair golden Wyandottes; a rather mixed lot of Langshans of the large and small type, yet with one or two birds which we much liked amongst them; some well-marked light Brahmas, perhaps a trifle wanting in size; a run with several broods of chickens that looked well and healthy, though not so many in number as a week or two later would have shown us. Next a large house and run given up to a big lot of well-marked silver-pencilled Hamburgs, from which we could have picked many good ones, despite the fact that the best had already been separated. A mixed lot of cockerels then invit-

ed attention, with several likely ones among them. Some Rouen ducks were next looked at, and a call from our guide, brought a fine Aylesbury drake and four or five ducks down stream. It was curious to notice how something - iron probably - in the water or soil had altered the colouring of the legs and bills from the accepted Aylesbury type. Two or three varieties of Bantams, and some Minorcas were inspected, and we were free to follow our host into the yard, where he had a number of good-looking colts, some nice young beasts, and several fine Berkshire sows in the sties around.

Time was all too short to do justice to all the live stock, and we were soon speeding dinnerwards behind a fast-trotting thoroughbred. Passing through the greenhouse on our way indoors, we noticed the incubator, one of Hearson's to hold 250 eggs, well filled. After the kind hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Sherriff had been done full justice to, a pleasant drive of five miles, past woods carpeted with primroses and hedgerows here and there just showing the first tinge of green, brought us to St. Albans. It was market day in the quaint old city, so we parted with Mr. Sherriff, who had business, and after a visit to the great abbey church and a call we had to pay, turned our faces Londonwards with something akin to a sigh that so red letter a day for a hard-worked editor did not come more often.

Archived by Gladys Brown

OLD DH BUILDINGS

Letter to Mr Jim Parker



Photo: Frank Cox

THE DE HAVILLAND BOMBING

In September last year, as part of the National Heritage Weekend, I visited St Luke's Church in St Albans Road East. The guides gave me a leaflet regarding the church and it indicated that there was a memorial to those killed in the 1940s bombing of the de Havilland works on the 3rd October.

When asked where it was, the guides could not answer but said they had been told that it was near the road. I could not find it at all. These guides were actually from St John's Church in South Hatfield so could be excused.

Mr Henry Gray kindly advised me where to find what I think the people who wrote the leaflet were writing about.

It is a double grave to the six men who were so badly injured in the attack that they could not have single graves.

It is situated at the foot of the larger of the two Fir trees towards the rear of the cemetery. The tomb stone has the following inscription:

In memory of colleagues and fellow workers who lost their lives as a result of enemy action.
3rd October 1940

Horace F C Allen	aged 27
Harry Fordham	aged 34
Frederick Hartley	aged 27
Frederick W Gibbs	aged 24
William George Sim	aged 41
John Holmes Smith	aged 26

The grave is very overgrown and really needs attention.

Eric Sherrard

In his oral history report of the occasion Stan Clayton said that at the time there were about 200 sheet metal workers employed in the factory and they undertook to make themselves responsible for the upkeep of the grave. Unfortunately with the passing of time and the reductions in the workforce this commitment has not been maintained but it is hoped to renew the interest with current members of the Sports and Social Club.

Thank you for your letter of 24 March regarding the listed former de Havilland buildings. The fire by the gate house has apparently gutted the former personnel department, which we believe was not part of the listing. The former Administration Building has been designated as a possible location for an aviation related facility. However, the condition has deteriorated so badly due to mindless vandalism and lack of effective security that this is no longer viable. The Museum directors were originally in discussion with the local authorities and Herts County Council with a view to undertaking this project, but have reluctantly withdrawn due to the uneconomic costs of restoring the building. The council negotiated plan for an Aviation Heritage Centre still has some 22 months out of five years to run before the admin block is handed back to Arlington, and apparently it is not possible to bring the date forward.

The staff restaurant between the Admin Block and the gate house is also part of the listing, but there does not appear to be any plans for its use so far. The buildings are all Grade II listed, which means that they are of no particular interest to English Heritage. They are therefore the responsibility of the local authority. The former Flight Test Hangar is Grade II* listed, which is of interest to English Heritage, and despite being badly damaged by vandals will be restored externally authentically, while adapting the interior to a sports centre.

The two people most responsible are Chris Conway, the Chief Planning Officer of Welwyn Hatfield Council and Tom Hennessey at County Hall. With Chris's responsibilities for the site planning, he is naturally very difficult to contact, so you may have more success with Tom Hennessey. I hope I have been helpful.

Philip Birtles

Chairman
DE HAVILLAND AIRCRAFT
MUSEUM TRUST LIMITED

NOSTALGIA

This poem was published in Hatfield Rotary Club's Magazine in 1990. It was composed by Isabel Beckwith who was born and still lives in Hatfield. For those of us who have spent most, or indeed all our lives in Hatfield, this poem will no doubt re-ignite many happy memories of the Hatfield that was, but I am sure the final line in the poem will be, to many, an apt description of their perception of Hatfield now.

Looking back on Hatfield,
the town in which I grew,
I think of all the old things,
and compare them with the new.
We had no Galleria and
no Tesco super store,
But in the street where I
grew up we never locked a door.
We didn't have the
'Social' but no child was
left alone,
And help was always close
at hand, we didn't need the phone.
Jack Oldings made the tractors,
de Havilland the planes,
and oh, of course, in Beaconsfield
they took care of all the trains.
We had a proper station
and the buses all were green,
And the daffodils in
Hatfield Park, made a most
fantastic scene.
The engines on the test beds
they ran both day and night,
And oh how very proud we were
at the Comet's first test flight.
It was really good to live here, though
we were 'out in the sticks'.
we didn't have the Forum, but we
could go to the flicks.
We had no dead Town Centre, it
was just St. Albans Road,
where they sold the things we
needed though it wasn't
'A La Mode'.
We children were not angels, but
we daren't be very bad
'Cos anyone who caught us would
Go and tell our Dad.
It can't be quite the same now,
With so many on the dole,
But how I miss the good old days
when Hatfield had a soul.

Michael Clark

TULIPS & TRADESCANT

The tulip in its various colours and forms is a very popular flower and almost an essential part of our Spring gardens, following on from the early snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils, heralding the burst of colour that Summer will bring. We tend to associate tulips with the bulb fields of Holland but their origins lie much further to the East.

A recently published book entitled *The Tulip by Anna Pavord* traces the history of the tulip from its origins in distant countries in parts of Asia, such as Tashkent, Samarkand and Turkey. It is thought that it was during the second half of the sixteenth century that this bold and exotic flower made its first appearance in Europe and by the early part of the seventeenth century it had become the ultimate status symbol in the gardens of the stately homes of England.

During the 1630s prices paid for individual tulip bulbs reached a phenomenal peak, particularly in the Netherlands, and this has become known as the period of "Tulipomania". The book records several examples of English gardeners being prominent purchasers and pioneers in popularising this new introduction to Europe. It is suggested that John Gerard, who looked after Lord Burghley's London garden in the Strand and the family house, Theobalds, at Cheshunt may

well have been growing tulips as early as the 1570s. Another reference dated 1611 or 1612 states "the Earl (of Salisbury's) gardener, John Tradescant, sent in his bill for various plants and seeds bought for my Lo(rd) in Holland" which included "800 tulip bulbs at 10/- the hundred". Although a considerable sum in those days it probably represented a 'good buy' when compared with the peak prices achieved some 20 years later. Subsequent references indicate that Tradescant may have brought back Russian tulips for Hatfield following his visit to Archangel in 1618.

A Paris nurseryman, Pierre Morin, who claimed to have a collection of 10,000 tulips, is known to have had customers all over Europe and is known to have "sold bulbs to John Tradescant for the grand Cecil garden at Hatfield". Another local reference describes a portrait of Arthur Capel, First Baron of Hadham and his family in their formal garden at Little Hadham during the first half of the seventeenth century which showed two urns filled with tulips of various shades.

From these few references contained in the very detailed account of the history of the tulip it is clear that the beautiful gardens of the grand houses of Hertfordshire played their part in popularising this flower which is now such an integral part of our English Spring scene.

Brian Lawrence

Your

AUGUST

Programme

13 September 7.30

Hertfordshire Convicts 1600 - 1870

Ken Griffin

11 October 2.30

History of the Panshanger Airfield

Mike Packham

8 November 7.30

In Grandfather's Footsteps - World War 1

Ann Grimshaw