

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

## *Editorial.....*

Since our last Newsletter in June it is gratifying to be able to report substantial progress in the outlook for the future of our society.

Two very constructive meetings of the committee resulted in the confirmation of Chris Martindale as secretary and the offer from Terry Pankhurst to serve on the committee. Terry was a founder member of Hatfield This Century and became chairman in 1993. Subsequently, although not active on the committee he has been a staunch supporter and member of the society. Following his co-option on to the committee as vice chairman Reg. Coleman has agreed to fulfil the office as chairman.

It was agreed that to alleviate the commitments on individual committee members, where possible specific projects would be allocated to sub-committees with a reporting role to the full committee.

Such projects nominated include the forthcoming Heritage Open Days and the anniversary of the London to Melbourne air race.

It is hoped that some member will be prepared to organise the summer outings which have been so popular in the past and possibly visits to other places of interest.

A publicity member to report activities to the local press and forth-

coming items in publications such as the Council LIFE magazine could increase our membership.

We have had offers from people to record their life stories, but we would need a recorder/interviewer.

Any volunteers to assist with projects would be welcome.

Our next problem arises with the refurbishment of the Swim Centre which will not be available for meetings next year. Reg and Terry have agreed to look into the matter of alternative venues but any suggestions would be welcomed.

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## **HERITAGE OPEN DAYS - 2004**

Members of Hatfield Local History Society will once again be arranging for Hatfield's participation in the Heritage Open Days event to be held between Friday 10 to Monday 13 September this year.

Visitors will have the opportunity to view contrasting styles of architecture ranging from the ancient Parish Church of St Etheldreda, the Victorian St Luke's Church, and two very distinctive post war churches, St John's and the Roman Catholic Marychurch.

It will also be possible to visit, probably for the final time before its sale and refurbishment, Howe Dell School. This building, once the home of several Rectors of Hatfield, has a long history and bears evidence of Tudor, Georgian and Victorian influences. A striking example of the town's post war development may be seen at the Cockaigne Housing Group and Community Development, 28 Grade II listed single storey houses, a community house, gardens and tennis court dating from the 1960s

Hatfield's most unusual contribution to this national event must be the display and demonstrations of Real Tennis due to take place at Hatfield House Tennis Club in Hatfield Park.

Mill Green Museum & Mill will be open at its regular times, featuring its current exhibition "Rubbish as Evidence". In addition, on Sunday afternoon staff at the Museum will be providing additional activities for children and adults and refreshments will also be available.

Guided walks based on different parts of the town will take place on Saturday and Sunday. These walks and entry to all participating buildings will be free. Details of opening times and other details are shown on the enclosed "flyers".

Brian G Lawrence

## USURPING THE de HAVILLAND NAME

Since its inception this Society has always been completely supportive of and involved with any matters relating to de Havilland.

In 1946 when A. S. Butler, then chairman of the company, gave 90 acres of land for educational purposes the technical college was situated there. The college was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in December 1952 with an intake of 1700 students. By 1977 it had become the Hatfield Polytechnic with around 4000 students.

Over the years changes have occurred with the company name being altered but the educational support continued until we were pleased to see our old poly become the University of Hertfordshire, with its leaning towards aeronautics.

We were all pleased when the statue of Sir Geoffrey was erected in front of the College Lane Campus.

With the new campus came the de Havilland Auditorium proudly claiming association with the man, the company and the site on which it was built. Sadly we learn of the change of name from de Havilland to the Weston Auditorium.

Your committee has supported a letter to the University written by Tony Lodge on its behalf and we quote from it here.

## “Naming of the new UH Auditorium, originally named 'de Havilland Auditorium';

We spoke about this back in May. I am grateful for the time you were able to give me then, which was helpful.

I telephoned you then to let you know of the great dismay and consternation among many local people on learning of the change of name of the Auditorium to 'the Weston Auditorium'. I don't think any of those responsible can have understood how badly this was received locally. I am a member of the Committee of the Hatfield Local History Society and they were appalled when I told them of the projected change, which by now is no doubt a *fait accompli*.

The bad local reaction was aggravated by the apparent absence of any prior notice or consultation. The de Havilland name had already been established and happily accepted - indeed, up to quite recently and possibly even still, some of the wall signage in the Auditorium foyer continued to label the building the de Havilland Auditorium. Also, much of the UH Arts publicity literature was doing the same long after April and May.

The reason for the change is noted and understood, but this will not impress local people nor lessen the local resentment, since the name 'Weston' means nothing locally and rates no following when compared with de Havilland. You and your colleagues at UH must surely know of the recent history of

Hatfield since the 1930's and the importance of the de Havilland family (by the way, do *they* know of the change?) and the world-famous aircraft factory founded by Sir Geoffrey, on the site of which the Auditorium now stands. There is a bronze sculpture of Sir Geoffrey in front of your College Lane campus - the links with Hatfield and with the University and the Polytechnic which preceded it are very strong and are remembered.

There is also the matter of the opening of the Auditorium last year and the publicity attending that and the related soliciting of financial sponsorship of seats under the de Havilland name - some of those sponsors/donors may well now feel greatly aggrieved by this change of name. Had I been one of those I would be asking for my money back.

UH may wish to consider that this unfortunate matter will have done nothing to improve its relationship with the local community - and it won't have enhanced the image of the Garfield Weston Foundation either, or of its commercial connections. There is an unpleasant whiff of 'big money' buying its way into something local and good to benefit from the reflected good image. On the whole the intention for and the implementation of the name change was unfortunate and not well handled.

Although the deed is now done, you may wish to comment on this letter - some of my colleagues in the Hatfield Local History Society are still angry! I continue to be annoyed about it myself, particularly as I am a strong supporter and defender of the University and its students.”

*Yours sincerely*

*Anthony G. Lodge*

## WITH SINCERE GRATITUDE



Following our report and the letter from Eric Sherrard in our last Newsletter regarding the condition of the communal grave of the six men killed in the bombing of the de Havilland 94 Shop, we are very pleased to be able to show this photograph of the renovated memorial in St. Luke's churchyard in Hatfield.

The work was funded and carried out by Messrs. J.J.Burgess

& Son of The Common, Hatfield as part of their community action and our thanks are extended to Mr. Justin Burgess for his generous action.

A similar project was undertaken in 1998 when the graves of Sir Geoffrey's two sons and their mother were renovated and erected at St. Peter's Church, Tewin.

### HATFIELD AND ITS PEOPLE 2004

It is now about a year since the idea arose that an up-date of the 1958/1964 booklets ought to be attempted.

Following a general meeting a number of attendees volunteered to take on one or another of the topics to which each of the twelve original booklets was devoted.

During the ensuing twelve months much time has been spent by many on the research required to gather together historical facts, anecdotes, hearsay and the like as well as useful contacts made to produce eventually, what it is hoped will be a pretty accurate account of the 'progress' (if that is what it is) which has changed the town of

Hatfield, its roads, its houses, its everything else into a University town.

Although I have already received some draft material from some of the teams, there still remains much to do. I have no doubt that many of those who have yet to produce a draft will be and have been collecting much data which will be collated, proof-read and typed up to join the eventual final drafts of all sections

I still do not expect that the finished booklets will be ready for publication much before the Spring of 2005 (that may be a little optimistic).

Let that not hinder the progress, however. So those of the authors who have more to do, ignore the East Enders and Coronation Street and enjoy making a name for your-

## THE GREAT AIR RACE

To mark the 1934 centenary of the Australian State of Victoria Sir Macpherson Robertson sponsored an air race from England to Australia.

Geoffrey de Havilland decided to take part although the company had nothing suitable that could compete. Within nine months five DH88 Comet racers had been designed and built. Three of these were entered in the race which started from Mildenhall in Suffolk on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October watched by a crowd of about 60,000 people.

The black DH88 piloted by Jim Mollison and Amy Johnson - aptly named Black Magic – was the first away. A green Comet which finished fourth was the third to leave. Sixth in the air was the Red Grosvenor House with Tom Campbell Black and Charles Scott at the controls. This plane achieved lasting fame by winning the race to Melbourne in 70 hours, 54 minutes and 18 seconds and is still flying with the Shuttleworth collection from Old Warden in Bedfordshire.

To mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the race a display, researched and presented by Reg. Coleman and Jim Parker, will be mounted in the local heritage section of the Hatfield Town Centre Library from September.

*Continued from Col. 2*

selves for future generations to revere.

*Peter Massingham*

*I have reprints of the original booklets available at £5. Let me know which you need.*

*Frank Cox*

*David Willson has located a supplier of binders suitable for these and other A5 Booklets. Samples will be displayed at our meetings, or visit [www.modernbookbinders.co.uk](http://www.modernbookbinders.co.uk)*



Workers on Harpsfield Farm before it became the de Havilland airfield.

They appear to be bundling hay but as it is thought that cattle were not kept at Harpsfield the hay was probably sent to London for sale.

Archaeological excavations on the site of the hall and farm have been carried out by the Museum of London. They hope to resume the dig next year.

It is thought that in the area of the hall various bronze age items have been found.

*L.F.C.Sinclair*  
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## *Autumn Meetings*

13 September 7.30  
**Hertfordshire Convicts  
1600-1870**  
Ken Griffin  
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11 October 2.30  
**History of the Panshanger  
Airfield**  
Mike Packham  
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8 November 7.30  
**In Grandfather's Footsteps -  
World War 1**  
Ann Grimshaw  
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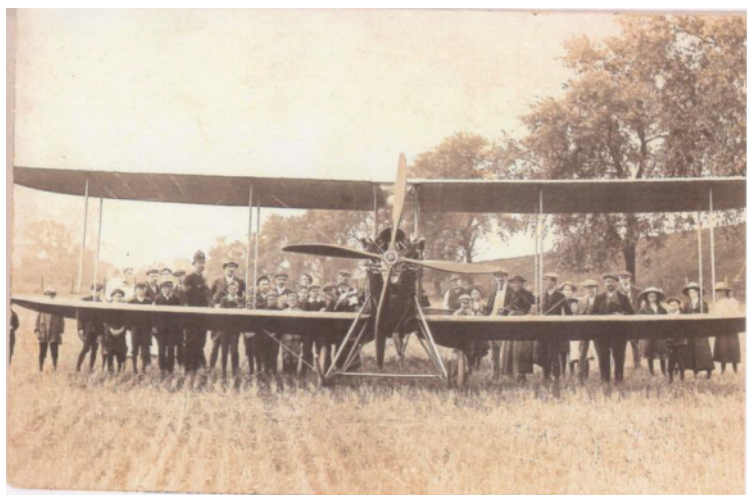
13 December 2.30  
**Open Meeting with Slides**  
By Reg  
**Memories and Treasured Junk**  
Bring yours to display

## *Letters .....*

*Reproduced from Hertfordshire Countryside, April 2004*

My grandfather, Hopkin Smith came to Hatfield in 1891 as a lad porter with the Great Northern Railway, earning ten shillings (50 pence) a week. He progressed to being a passenger guard, lodging with Mr. William Foxlee, an engine driver, and his family at 8 Beaconsfield Terrace by 1901. My grandmother was Bessie Woolcott, who became cook/housekeeper to Dr. Charles Drage of North Place in 1893, after his wife Elinor had died. Hopkin and Bessie were married in 1901, and my mother Hilda was born at 2 Chapmans Terrace, behind Fore Street in 1902. The family were soon to move to 36 Gracemead Cottages where young Hopkin was born in 1906 and Alice in 1910. All three were baptised at St. Etheldreda's Church. Hilda, now 101, lived in Harpenden, and can remember as a young schoolgirl the statue of Lord Salisbury being unveiled in 1906. Lady Salisbury, wife of the 4th Marquis, used to visit Gracemead Cottages. Cakes and plates were brought out when she came, and on one occasion Hilda played her violin to her! Today Hilda can still picture her classroom with its benches at the old London Road School (Diamond Garage is now near the site), and the children's annual walk up to the church on Ascension Day. Each pupil carried a posy of flowers, usually Canterbury Bells. It has been great fun researching our family history in Hatfield. Two things particularly are unsolved - to discover a picture of Gracemead Cottages, and secondly, details of a procession around 1908-1910. My mother remembers that the school children had seats on a stand in the station forecourt to see this grand procession of carriages with an important person, possibly the Lord Mayor of London? Perhaps someone can help please?

*Marion Donaldson Harpenden*



The first plane to land in Hatfield, a BE2 series experimental bomber which made a forced landing at Peartree Farm, was designed by Geoffrey de Havilland who 20 years later brought his company to the town. The incident caused considerable excitement.

Developed from the B.E.1, the B.E.2 with a 70-h.p. Renault

engine, appeared in 1912. It distinguished itself in the hands of de Havilland during the Military Trials of that year by outperforming all the competitors. The B.E.2 formed the basis for the later B.E.2C. 2D and 2E, which were produced in great quantities during the 1914-1918 war.