

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

Editorial.....

It would appear that the post let us down rather in December and a number of members did not receive their Newsletter. I can assure you that they were all posted but if yours did not arrive, let me know and another will be sent.

We must thank Reg and Terry for arranging our new venue at the games room of Friendship House in Wellfield Close. It has been pointed out that the room is available for 30 minutes before a speaker is due to start and any assistance to prepare the seating etc. would be welcome. It could also provide the opportunity to meet and chat with other members and friends.

Education has been prominent during the past few months with Dick Whittingham explaining the de Havilland involvement with Hatfield to children at the new De Havilland School - see Letters on Page 4. His audio tape is available.

Groundwork Hertfordshire, a charitable Trust aimed at developing greener, safer, cleaner living spaces in Hertfordshire worked with students from the Onslow St. Audrey's school to produce a booklet entitled 'The Past on Your Doorstep - The Future in Your Hands'. Centred mainly on the de Havilland connection and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund the booklet is available, free of charge, from the Library or Museum.

Another project in which the Society was deeply involved was teacher training when nearly 100 teacher students from the University descended on the Museum at Mill Green to research local history as part of the course for teaching this curriculum subject.

Unfortunately, as satisfying as it is to be involved with these projects and to maintain regular commitments such as arranging meetings, preparing Newsletters and publications and keeping in touch with all our members, it is becoming an overwhelming task for the few active committee members. Could you help with any of these matters, even if not on the committee? Please think about it rather than let the society dissolve.

Do You

have a local story to tell?

It could be of your life

or work, your school,

hobby or pastime,

your family tree,

anything to interest

members and friends.

*We will help you write and prepare it.
Just tell us!*

Your Spring Programme

Monday March 14 7.30 pm

Nicholas Maddex

Tales and Legends of Mid-Herts

Highwaymen Witches Ghosts & Poachers

Thursday April 14 2.30 pm

Terry Cox

From Dock Green to Doc Martin

Light hearted review of Herts Constabulary
From recruitment to Retirement

Monday May 9 7.30 pm

Annual General Meeting

Followed by

Jim Page

Medieval New Towns in Hertfordshire

Stan's Story

It all started for me on the 11th February 1922. I was born to Emma and Jim Clayton in Gorton, Manchester. My father was a skilled turner in a large local engineering firm. My mother was a house wife because not only had she given birth to me, she also had another son Frank, who was two and a half years older than me. Prior to his arrival my mother was the Manageress of a Tripe shop.

For the first part of their married life they, like most people in those days, started off by living with some part of the family. Our family stayed with my Dad's mother. I must have been around seven years old when we moved into our new house. Life for us must have been very similar to most other families in the 1920's; a little mundane with very little money to spare or spend, but I would think very happy with our lot. A life where there were no motor cars, TV's, washing machines, refrigerators etc. A life where you were lucky if you had a wireless and if anybody had a push bike they were almost upper class.

Unemployment in Manchester and the area where we lived was getting very bad and my Father was one of the lucky ones as he was one of the last machinists to be laid off. My first thought with regards to unemployment was that at least we were not poor and when I look back we were both dressed as good as the best and a lot better than some of the children. Plus, for me my brother was 2½ years older than me which meant I did not get any of his hand me downs.

Dad was somewhat fortunate as he was unemployed for less than 2 years and that was at the latter end of the depression. I remember one job he had during that time which he found to be very hard, that was being a stoker on Uncle Len's steam powered huge tipper lorry and trailer. By approximately 6 a.m. he had walked to where the vehicle was parked. He then cleaned out the fire box, started a new fire and got the steam up, and cleaned all the brass

and copper parts. This was at the time a revolutionary piece of machinery which would collect tarmacadam and then distribute it onto half the width of the road at the required depth. In those days a steam roller would follow and flatten the tarmacadam.

During this period of unemployment my mother had taken a job as the cook at the Lake Hotel which was one of the entrances to Belle Vue. Later on she retained her job as cook and took on the job of bar maid as well; her hours of work were from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. - a 12 hour day. Of course this meant my Father received no unemployment money and they had nothing to do with the Means Test where people came to your house and told you to sell this and that before you got any help.

I remember the time I was almost 13 years of age and I was able to get a morning paper round for which I received 2/6d per week. Today that would be the equivalent of 22½p except the Government has got rid of the ½d. I can still remember being proud when I took my first 2/6d home to assist the family coffers. I was given 6d and my Father was given 2/- (20p); that was his total allowance for the week. That was for fares while looking for work and for any entertainment like a few gills of beer (a gill being a ¼ of a pint), plus a game or two of billiards. My Father like most men would hear that some firm was going to take on labour and they would walk or run miles only to be told the job had been taken.

I was never left alone at home as my parent's friends across the road would keep their eye on me. At 9.30 p.m., 6 days a week, my Father and I would start our 2 mile walk to meet my Mother outside her work.

Then came the time when my Father was told that a large aircraft firm in Hatfield, Hertfordshire was taking on skilled turners. The year was 1935, the firm was de Havillands and Hatfield was 20 miles from London. He accepted this challenge because like most other people who were unemployed, he didn't like it. He was given no financial help to go the 200 miles because again my Mother was working. But it was a chance of work and the money for the journey came from my Mother pawning her

wedding ring. There was enough for the fare to London and then to Hatfield in Hertfordshire. He was able to get digs shortly after his arrival and was interviewed the following day. He was taken on not only as a machinist but also as a turner in the tool room. The latter was always considered a higher type of work and of course a little higher wage was paid. My Father stayed with the family he was lodging with from early August 1935 until the middle of December 1935 when he found a house to rent. They were building about 40 new houses each side of the road and as soon as possible my Mother joined him and shortly after the furniture arrived at Hatfield and they moved in.

One of the things which will always stay in my memory is the view from these houses. There was a corn field stretching as far as the eye could see. The only building that could be seen was Crawford's farm about 400 hundred yards away and the Shredded Wheat Silo's which were about 4 miles away. The latter are still there today in Welwyn Garden City. Although we were quite used to open spaces, the expanse of corn especially when it was reaping, was something to behold. Around the edge for 8 to 10 feet in were red poppies. Coming from an area where there was no agriculture it was great to see and still remains with me after all those years.

Because I was only 13 years of age I had to start at a new school in Hatfield and continued until I left at the Easter holidays. I have got to say that school life was not the most pleasant thing I have ever done and I feel that now I have educated myself to a standard which I am comfortable with. Spelling was the worst subject but because of the activities I have been associated with during my life, I have achieved a standard now with which I can live. I still have to look up words in the dictionary and have in fact worn out one completely; plus the second one is well on the way. I often think how lucky I was to have a tolerant wife who could also spell.

Excerpt from the life story of Stanley Clayton

ANSWERS TO THE DECEMBER QUIZ



The Welwyn Department Stores shop was located on the Broadway, Great North Road from 1930 until 1934 when it became the showroom for Richardsons, Builders Merchant. Later it was taken over by Worrell Bros. selling boots and shoes.

The first self service shop in Hatfield was Tingey's at Roe Green Complex with Norman Tingey as proprietor, managed by Phillip Glostein, a German ex-POW who had worked for Randall Tingey. The success of this venture persuaded Randall to apply it to 101 St. Albans Road in 1957

As an outpatient of Hatfield House military hospital during the second world war, Sir Leonard Hutton, the famous England cricketer, stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Hancock at No. 24 Glebe Cottages whilst he completed his treatment, as he was not ill enough to be confined to hospital.



Albion Terrace - colloquially known as Flint Cottages - was a row of 6 cottages running between St. Albans Road and the Common leading to Streader's sawmill and facing Lovell's blacksmith shop. They were numbered 6 to 1 from St. Albans

Road until 1923 when they were re-designated 110 to 120 St. Albans Road. They were demolished as part of the New Town development in 1954.

Hay-on-Wye

My grandfather, John Tingey, remembered seeing both Kit Nashe and the Fox Twins, all notorious local poachers, in the Gun public house in St. Albans Road. He thought this would

have been before 1920 so would have been before Kit ended up in the Union workhouse. This supposes that they did occasionally get as far as Hatfield.

Janet Robinson

Letters

Hatfield

A neighbour and friend of mine, who is a school governor found that many children in the amalgamated and newly-named De Havilland School in Travellers Lane were not aware of the significance of their school's new name. Some even thought that it had been named after the University Campus!! She thought that this was a shame, and knowing that I had worked at de H's for 50 years asked if I would consider giving a talk to the children and explain what the name meant to Hatfield.

I told them what Hatfield was like when I arrived to start work at de H's as an apprentice in 1935 at the age of 15 and having to live in various "digs". They were particularly interested in Sir Geoffrey's early attempts to build a flying machine and impressed at his courage in taking his wife for a flight with their baby son in her arms. They were amused that 32 years later the "baby", Geoffrey Jnr was now the Chief Test Pilot at Hatfield. They had some difficulty in imagining the size of the airfield in those days, and indeed exactly where it was, it stretched from the Airfield Pub to Notcutts!! I hope that the talk gave them some understanding of what the name de Havilland means to Hatfield and to be proud that their school is keeping the name alive.

Some 2 or 3 years ago I was invited by your Local History Group to record my experiences at de H's. I made a tape and handed it in, but for some reason it didn't reach either the Library or the Mill Green Museum. I have now up-dated it and made 2 copies which have now been delivered to the Museum and Library. It is entitled "Music and Planes". Planes covers my time at de H's from 1935 to 1985. "Music" refers to the fact that in addition to being a plane-maker I was also a dance-band pianist, starting by playing at the Hatfield Public Hall for Bert Freeman and locally with Sid Rumbelow and eventually graduating to venues such as Wembley Town Hall, the Waldorf and the Savoy.

R.L. Whittingham

Chairman's Report March 2005

Our last event of 2004, our Christmas get together was held at No. 1 Town Centre (originally Tingey's Furniture Corner Shop). One room was used for reception, displays and refreshments while in the other room I showed slides on the theme of 'Memories and Treasured Junk'. To complete the festivities Jim Parker provided a free raffle.

This Year's programme started off with a meeting at Friendship House, our new venue when Stevie Doherty from Stevenage Museum showed a video and slides on 'Stevenage from Stone age to New Town'.

Congratulations to Elizabeth Holman, Heritage Education Officer of the Herts Groundwork Trust and to Onslow St. Audrey's School for producing the booklet 'The Past on Your Doorstep – The Future in Your Hands'. The booklet features the school students' impressions when researching de Havillands and its

effect on Hatfield. Elizabeth has now moved on to Boreham Wood to work with a school there on the history of the local film studios.

Ninety six teacher students from the University visited the Mill Green Museum on the 8th of February to view the maps, photographs and documents prepared for them. Three of your committee and the vice chairman of the Welwyn History Society were on duty in the classroom attempting to give guidance and answer questions.

Since the 1970s up until recently it had been a secret to most; so perhaps some of you still haven't heard that the 'Aviator', Howard Hughes returned to flying for the first time since 1947 when he co-piloted a HS748 flown from Hatfield in 1973. I understand that there will be more on this in a book 'Shadows of the Fifties' edited by Peter Campbell to be published

in May.

Following on from the success of our Great Air Race display Jim Parker is preparing another on the subject of the sixtieth anniversary of the de Havilland Dove.

Jim and I are also keen to extend the 'Early Days of de Havilland Hatfield' display which we prepared for the December meeting. At present the display consists of two boards of 1930s photographs copied from the album of Ben French and the late Andrew Chrichton. If anyone has photographs or information applicable to the above two projects please get in touch with us.

Are any members interested in starting projects on the other parts of Hatfield's aviation history – Hawker Siddeley and British Aerospace?

Reg Coleman

The Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment

On the battlefield of Ypres in 1914 newly trained men of the 1st Hertfords fought alongside regular Irish Guards to stem the German offensive in Belgium.

This first action so impressed the Guards Commander he sent a message back from the front saying "the Herts Regiment is beyond all praise".

The Regiment stayed at the front fighting in some of the worst battles of the Great War including Loos, Passchendaele and the Somme. At the River Ancre in 1916 their courage won for them 29 awards for bravery in two days.

Sadly by 1918 the Regiment was badly depleted following

heavy casualties in a gas attack. To make up the numbers, Bedfordshire men were drafted in and the Herts Regiment fought on for another six months until the armistice of November 11th.

A year after the war the two regiments amalgamated to become the Beds and Herts, which was appropriate, due to their long and close military association. It came about because peacetime cuts in the army's strength prevented Hertfordshire reforming its own regular infantry regiment.

*Extract from story by Denis Bidwell
published in HertfordshireH Countryside
July 1988*

FAMILY HISTORY ADVICE SESSIONS

On the first Tuesday of each month from 10 am until 4 pm experienced members of Hertfordshire Family History Society will be available to give individual help and advice on how to begin tracing your family history, or what to do if you get stuck. No need to book, but there may be a limit of 15 minutes per person at busy times.

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