

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

Editorial

The past three months have been quite hectic for your committee. To accommodate those members who could not attend meetings during working hours, meetings have been held in the evenings with the added problem of a meeting place. We are most grateful to Pat Sherrard and Miriam Gaskin for converting their lounges into temporary committee meeting places.

As chairman, Terry Pankhurst represented the Society at the Hatfield Town Council Annual Service at St. John's church.

Friendship House has been booked for members' meetings until next May and Terry has negotiated costs and conditions of hire. He hopes to start oral history recordings during the coming winter. Frank Cox will co-operate with the museum regarding the listing and storage of the tapes.

Jim Parker's excellent display of the DH Dove aircraft was prominently displayed in the window of the library and occasioned considerable interest.

Reg Coleman has addressed the pupils of the De Havilland School on the subject of WW2 evacuees with references to Gladys Brown's recorded memories.

Chris Martindale has arranged for speakers for next year to follow the most informative and entertaining historical story of the soldier at Waterloo and the Lost Gardens of Hertfordshire which evoked the possibility of a visit to Panshanger gardens next year.

We are grateful to Ron Kingdon for the gift of a projector for our meetings.

Tony Lodge has negotiated for a visit to Nast Hyde house on Sunday 14 May. Tickets, limited to 35, will cost members £5 to include tea and biscuits and a donation to the MENAT charity and will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Contact Tony Lodge.

We have been invited to participate in a Christmas event to be organised by the Town Council on Saturday 17 December between 10 am and 4 pm. This will be held at the Community Resource Centre, Number One, Hatfield. The Guides will be distributing Flyers and there will be live coverage by Hertbeat FM radio. Chris, Joan and Miriam will work together on this and hope for support from members. Our stall will include a display of publications and panels of earlier projects. If you are prepared to help, talk about us to the public and recruit new members phone Chris.

Letters

Abingdon

Your September newsletter was passed on to me by a local acquaintance, Mr, George Relph. I found Ms Laurence's article most interesting, because I had been there.

I was in Shenley military hospital at the end of the war with pneumonia. In the spring of 1945 I was sent to Bush Hall for two weeks convalescence. I remember a mellow building with lovely grounds, but I don't remember a stream.

The stay was memorable, because while there I saw my first jet plane. It was a De Havilland twin boom Vampire. As this whistled overhead, I stared up in amazement. When I looked down again, I realised that I was on my own - all the battle hardened soldiers had flattened themselves to the ground at the first sound of a penetrating whistle overhead! With best wishes to your Society.

Ernest Kohn

Worthing

I thought I was getting on at 92 yrs, but Jim Parker at 192 beats me! (*Well spotted - Sept. Newsletter error. Ed.*)

I was working in Fore Street in the early 30s and remember 2 young men coming up the hill every morning to old Petit's grocery shop opposite Whitehead's the butcher. I left Fore Street soon after and worked at Welwyn Garden City. I was called up in 1940 and have only been back to Hatfield twice, once to my father's funeral and once to the Flower Festival in the garden of Hatfield House by kind invitation of Lady Salisbury.

Yours truly,

G. Austin Prime

HATFIELD'S OLD CHALK MINES

Subsidence in Briars Lane

By Maurice Richardson

We went to the meeting in Briars Lane school and were fascinated to see videos of some of the tunnels. They got the pictures by making shafts down which they dropped a camera. You could almost imagine miners in the Victorian era emerging from the tunnel openings.

The meeting was chaired by Bob Jewell on behalf of WH Council and there were reps from HCC and the consultants etc. About 30 residents attended, and those closely affected were mainly concerned to know when work would start and be completed and, in some cases, to be given a written confirmation that their property was not affected, so that they could pass it to their insurers. They were promised that this would be done.

We were told that over 900 dynamic probes were made (I gathered that this meant testing from above for any indication of holes or non-solid matter) and a smaller number of shafts down to 11 - 20 metres below ground. They identified a number of places where there had been a shaft from the surface, but it seemed as though the tunnels from them may have been interconnected.

The English Partnership provided about £1 million for the investigation, an assessment will now be made of the best method of filling each area, eg concrete or expanding foam, and a request will be submitted to EP for funding probably in November. EP are expected to take about 4 months to come up with an answer, and the team were optimistic that EP would fund all or much of the work. If the prospects looked gloomy, say early next year, a public meeting would be called to enable public and political pressure to be applied. In the last resort funds might have to be provided by the local authority, with the possibility that householders' insurers might be involved. June/July could be the start date of the work, with completion about six months later

Dear Mr Atkinson

SALISBURY VILLAGE

Open letter to Councillor Atkinson, Welwyn Hatfield Council

Firstly let me explain why I, a resident of St Albans, I am sending this letter to you. The matter to which I refer is one which I think you may be able to relate to as you live in the Ellenbrook district and it is also something of considerable interest to me.

I recently picked up the enclosed brochure and, as someone who was born and brought up in Hatfield and have spent most of my life in the area, I was appalled to find that in the entire glossy brochure no mention is made of Hatfield, although to my mind Astwick Manor has always been part of Hatfield! The description refers to Welwyn Garden City and St Albans, but there are no photographs of attractions in Hatfield (e.g. the Old Town or Hatfield House). Furthermore, the maps on the back show Hatfield in less prominent type than all the other towns shown. "Coopers Green Lane" is in bolder type than "Hatfield Tunnel"! There is no mention of Hatfield Station despite it being closer to properties than Welwyn Garden City or St Albans Stations which are highlighted and the address quoted carefully avoids the inclusion of Hatfield even though the postcode is clearly a Hatfield one. These omissions cannot be coincidental and I think the reason is clear to anyone who has a grain of local knowledge.

Of course, the content of a developers' and agents' brochure is entirely their decision but I am in no doubt whatsoever that the wording has been carefully chosen as they feel that any reference to Hatfield would tend to make the apartments less attractive to prospective purchasers. I seem to recall that when housing development began on the airfield a few years ago the location was also described as being between St Albans and Welwyn Garden City.

I am sad to say that Hatfield has suffered badly over recent decades by comparison with its neighbours, particularly Welwyn Garden City and I

am convinced that it will take more than the re-generation of the Town Centre, if it ever happens to the extent projected, to make Hatfield an appealing place to future prospective residents. Nevertheless I remain hopeful that somehow it can become, once more, a desirable location and trust that the elected representatives will not remain oblivious of the unfortunate trends that have led to the present situation and will do everything in their power and re-double their efforts to restore real pride to the community of this historic town.

Brian Lawrence

(Verbatim et liberatim)

"Dear Brian

Please except my thanks for your letter and the copy of the sales literature. I have contact Frosts and have raised the issue with them because I like you have been upset by the lack of connection the developers have made with Hatfield as a clear example the one about Salisbury Village near St Albans.

So I as past Chairman of Hatfield Town Council and councillor for the north ward in which Astwick manor is located. Further being one of the councillors who approved the application to allow this redevelopment are some what disturbed by what you have presented to me?

You are right to bring this to my attention and be rest assured I will be addressing these agents and developer with a view to stopping this under value of our fine Town

I have taken to task the estate agents for their sales material and have sent them a video of Hatfield back to the future which will show the quality and history of Hatfield.

Please let others know about your contact as I would like to hear from all about this so we can start the change
Regards."

Cllr. Nick Atkinson

IN MEMORIUM

By Frank Cox

Recently whilst pursuing his interest in the Great War my son was visiting the battlefields of the Somme and in his bed and breakfast accommodation was displayed a beautifully carved plaque as pictured:



The inscription reads

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY
OF THE MEMBERS OF
DAGMAR HOUSE SCHOOL
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE
GREAT WAR

JFL ADCOCK VJ AUSTIN
HK BRIGGS HG COLLINS JA DAVIS
ND EDINBOROUGH W HELDRETT
WHN GIBBS M LE GRAIN AG
MAGDALEN J MASSON D MILLER
TGS PAYNE A PRICE GW PRICE
J RICHARDSON AE SEARLE JA
STARKEY JH WALKER
GH WHITTARD SBR WILLIAMS

The proprietor had no knowledge of the school or of the men named.

This has instigated a project to research the school and its history and to try to identify the ex-pupils.

Here is the first episode.

SCHOOL FOR YOUNG GENTLEMEN

In 1861 John Dare, a 24 year old schoolmaster from Bridgewater in Somerset, had set up a boarding school for young gentlemen in adjoining houses Nos. 5 and 6 Spring Villas in French Horn Lane, Hatfield, near where the old Wesleyan Chapel was built. He lived there with his wife, Mary and a 4 year old adopted son, John Raymond Sheehan a local boy who had been born in Hatfield.

By 1871 they had 24 boarding pupils aged between 8 and 16 and hailing from such places as the East Indies, Illinois USA and Astwick. Possibly sons of local gentry attended as day pupils.

By 1881 the Dares had moved with the school to Dagmar House, Great North Road, Hatfield just south of the Wrestlers public house at the junction of St. Albans Road. 30 pupils were boarding at that time.

On the 1st March 1882 John Raymond signed a deed evidencing a change of name and from then was known as Sheehan Dare.

Another John Sheehan, a professor of music from Cork in Ireland with his wife, Lavinia and daughter, also a music teacher had moved into the Spring Villas property.

In 1882 John Raymond Sheehan Dare married Caroline Eliza Lane from Hickling, Norfolk at Holbeach, Lincolnshire and was

soon living in Fore Street, Hatfield.

Following the death of John Dare in April 1891, his adopted son with his wife Caroline, 3 daughters and 2 sons were established in Dagmar House with 18 boarding pupils.

Of the 37 boarders recorded in 1901 none were local lads. Four originated from the USA, 2 from India and 19 from London.

In 1902 the schools were redesignated the Hatfield Collegiate Schools.

The local directory for Hatfield names Capt. M. Ayton as the principal in 1933.

The booklet 'HATFIELD and its people' part 8 tells us that the school was sold c. 1923 to Messrs. T.W.Hearle and J.C. Prentice and closed about 1934.

Another interesting facet from the same booklet records that "1886 Mrs. Caroline Sheehan-Dare" (wife of John Raymond) had a "ladies' school, Fore Street (Morton House); continued c. 1888 by John Dare, and c. 1892 by his widow Mrs. Mary Ann Dare. About 1898 this school moved to Dagmar House and c. 1900 to the adjacent Alexandra House (J. R. Sheehan-Dare principal). School sold c. 1923.... Closed about 1934."

Reliable information tells us that Alexandra House School moved to Newtown House, 66 St. Albans Road c. 1934 with Miss Mary Thomas as principal.



For Your Diary

Thursday December 8 2.30

Open Meeting with theme "**Life on the Home Front**"

Jean West with extracts from her WW2 diaries

Bring your own memorabilia and memories

Write your own short story of remembered event for display to members

Free raffle!! Free admission for members and visitors!!

Thursday February 9 2.30

Road to the North

Jim Page

Will talk about the Great North Road

Monday 13 March 7.30

The Life of Emma Hamilton

Terry Pankhurst

Note change → Monday 10 April 2.30

Pull Yourself Together Girls

The Spirella (Letchworth Corset Company) Story

Robert Lancaster

Curator First City Heritage Museum

Monday 8 May 7.30

Annual General Meeting

followed by

A Knight, A Countess And A Packet of Sandwiches

The Irish Rising, Roger Casement and the Countess of Markovitch

Terry Cox

Sunday 14 May 2.00

Escorted Tour of Great Nast Hyde House

Limited number by ticket only

Booking by Tony Lodge

THE HERTFORDSHIRE CENSUS 1851

Family History Edition

Edited by Nigel Goose

This 1851 census is the first reliable census to be conducted, giving information on name, address, sex, age, marital condition, family relationships, occupation and place of birth. An invaluable resource for family historians.

This CD provides a transcription for the ancient county of Hertfordshire, in a format which is compatible with most types of software. The files are in Microsoft Word, and also in tab-separated text files for easy transfer to all popular spreadsheet and database software

- **Bonus file:** Admissions and Discharges from Hatfield Union Workhouse 1834-61

Published by the Centre for Regional and Local History, University of Hertfordshire, and University of Hertfordshire Press. CD-ROM £12.50. p & p £2

Send orders to Dr. S.A.Jennings, Centre for Regional and Local History, University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9AB.



HIGH FLIGHT COLLECTION

Anyone interested in aviation may like to know that there is a circulating collection of aviation books at Hatfield Library until the New Year. The books were donated to the library service by the wife of Tony Marston who during his life created the collection.