

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history
HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NO 79 December 2010

HOGS YEOTHAM

A chance look at an old Ordnance Survey map revealed the above place name located on, what was to become, part of De Havilland's Manor Road site.

A document at HCC archives reveal that, in 1885, there were, at Hogs Yeotham, two messuages (houses with land and buildings) with three fields totaling about 10 acres: Longfield, Upperfield and Barnfield. The Copyhold tenancy was then held by a Rose Bryan and an ancient fealty of 5 shillings per year was to be paid to the Lord of the Manor of Astwick - then a John Lloyd. The two messuages appeared to have become a single, six roomed building by the time of the 1911 census. It was still being lived in 40 years later by an elderly lady named Rene Reeves. Recollections from local folk later identified (dialectically speaking) Hogs Jolt'am as being the real 'Poets' house - and not the nearby-Beech Cottage as reported in Newsletter 77. The place was also called Hogs Yeotham Common, Hogs Yotham and erroneously reported as Hawkes Yeotham (but never, fortunately, as Hogs Bottom!). However, Hogs Yeotham is clearly seen as a settlement in the 1879 OS map and appears to have always been within the Manor of Astwick. The earliest reference found was in 1630, when a 'Neeles House' was alluded to at Flogs Yotcham in a topographical map showing fields relating to, and the borders surrounding, the Manor of Harpsfield Hall.

It shows an ancient track- named *Upwood Lane* - that wended its way from Coopers Green Lane to Hogs Yeotham, and later spurred off to Harpsfield Hall. Its route was still in use some 325 years later, when a few future Hatfield Local History Society members visited the place, in the mid 1950s, to find a vandalised building and hundreds of old rotting books strewn around the garden - some of which were once, evidently, expensively bound.

Member Jim Parker has never forgotten the title of one book - *Jane's Fighting Ships*.

In about 1940, the place was once visited by our Ben French, and his work colleague Don Lawrence. Ben recalls seeing chickens running around the garden and an old lady at the door. This lady may have been 69 year old Ada, the mother of Rene Reeves above. Ada was also the wife of the famed 'Poet', who had died in March 1938. He became Rene's stepfather. His name was Garnet Smith.

The Hertfordshire Advertiser announced his passing:

Death of a Brilliant Scholar

....Mr Garnet Smith, of Hawkes Yeotham...has died in his 77th year. Just before his death he was writing a sequel to his book the Melancholy of Stephen Allard.... He took his BA degree at Queens College, Oxford where for some years he was a tutor. He later made his name as an essayist, poet and writer. For 26 years he reviewed books for the Times Literary Supplement and contributed to many Magazines. A shy, sensitive man, he was looked upon as a brilliant scholar by his contemporaries. In his own library he had over 6,000 Books.....Perhaps some of these were the ones found rotting in the garden of his home almost 20 years later? Garnet Smith was buried in Newtown Churchyard.



The brick oven at the Poets' House

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FARMING AT DE HAVILLANDS

In October 2010 a country park, called Ellenbrook Fields, was opened on part of the remaining De Havilland airfield site - the southern part, between the end of the new Salisbury Village housing estate and the Notcutts garden centre boundary.

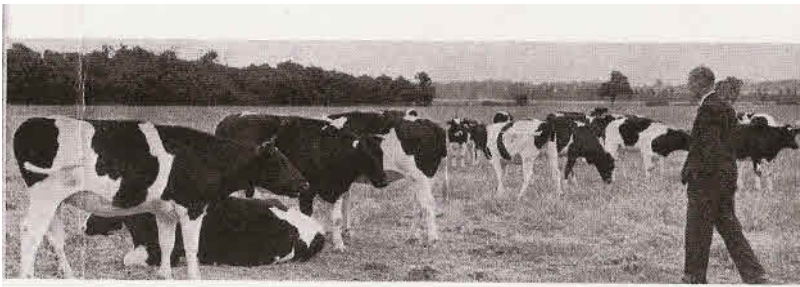
Whilst information boards warn that the area is destined to become a gravel quarry, there is now a pastoral reminder of the non-aircraft activity that took place on the ex De Havilland's site by the Company: Farming. A herd of about a dozen longhorn cattle now graze upon what once was the runway.

As World War 2 approached, agriculture began to play a significant role at the aerodrome. In 1938, former De Havilland Chairman, Alan S. Butler, initiated a drive in Hatfield to help feed the Country with home-grown produce by restoring uncultivated land owned by the DH Company.

He gave this important task to DH's first Agricultural Manager, Reg Sutterby.

Reg had joined the Company's ground staff in 1933 to "look after a little bit of garden in front of the office block, and the (grass) airfield". This was at a time when farming at DH's was not even contemplated.

Reg Sutterby and cows on De Havilland Farmland



He was also the father of HLHS member Jill Beresford, who has kindly provided a copy of a trade article 'Comet Country' that appeared in the autumn 1952 edition of the Ford Motor Company's magazine. However, in 1938, he successfully set about cultivating every odd parcel of land that had previously produced nothing. He dug up playing fields, tennis courts, a golf course, lawns and wasteland.

He had soil samples analysed and had to spread 20 tons of chalk per acre to bring into use 220 acres of arable land under the plough. Throughout the war, sufficient green vegetables were produced to canteens that catered for over 6,000 people - including enough potatoes for 10 months of the year.

All this valuable contribution to the war effort was achieved by borrowing machinery from neighbouring farmers. Remarkably, permission to buy tractors was denied him during the war, as Hatfield was not an 'agricultural holding' in the eyes of the Agricultural Executive Committee.

By the early 1950s, Reg Sutterby was farming De Havilland's owned lands that were once part of the ancient Manors of Great Nast Hyde, Harpsfield Hall and Astwick.

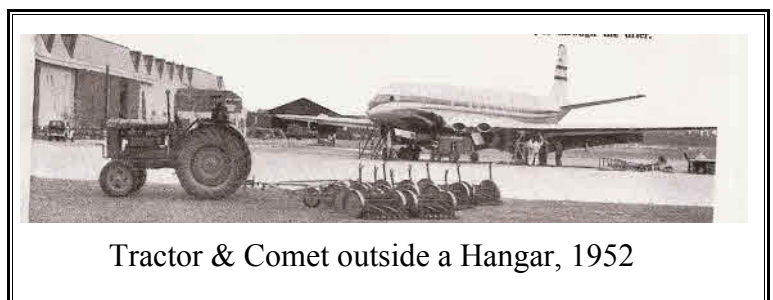
In all 1,400 acres were farmed including 750 under the plough.

After the War, livestock began to be introduced. Reg commandeered former RAF huts and disused corrugated steel aircraft hangers for use as barns. A foundation herd of twenty Mayford Friesian heifers were bought, also a prized bull - the son of the 9000 guinea Dutch Rudolph.

A foundation herd of Wessex Saddleback pigs were also procured which, by 1953, had grown to over a thousand 'fatteners' which were fed upon home grown meal and factory canteen waste.

Over 4,000 head of poultry - turkey's and a few varieties of chicken - were housed in the old RAF huts with thermostatically controlled heating and lighting installed.

The Ford magazine article noted that agriculture, at the DH Hatfield site, was operated on strictly commercial lines and 'not backed by unlimited support by the parent Company, to which they are a credit'. And it concludes 'Complete harmony between the world's oldest industry and one of the newest becomes a reality when one watches the Comets and Venoms speed down the runway between the waving crops of wheat and barley'.



Tractor & Comet outside a Hangar, 1952

Sad note: Mrs Pat Sherrard passed away on 10th November. Pat was our Minutes Secretary and involved with our History Society for over 20 years. No further details are available at time of going to press.

Policing in 1960s Hatfield

In October 2010, Hatfield's vacated police station on St Albans Road East was demolished, 40 years after its construction.

One man watching it being pulled down was John 'Jock' Martin, once a well known local Constable pounding his beat in Hatfield from 1965. He remembers working from this station when it first opened in 1970. He had also served at the station it replaced - the old Victorian one across the road, which was built in 1883.

In the early 60s, Jock was living in Airdrie, Scotland and, as a young man, had worked making steel cables at the Speedwell factory, he did some agricultural jobs too such as fencing. However, employment prospects weren't particularly good in Scotland then, so he attempted to follow his brother into the local police force. Jock was 27 then and married with three young daughters.

But, as coincidence had it, the Hertfordshire Constabulary were also on a recruitment drive in Scotland at the time. Jock applied to join them, and passed an entrance exam in November 1964. Within two months he had joined the Police and was stepping off the train at Hatfield railway station as PC811.

His initial thoughts were that Hatfield was a small place with not much going on.

However, his views were to change over time.

As a uniformed beat bobby, he was based at the old Victorian Station for the first 5 years. This building also doubled as the Hertfordshire Police Headquarters with the County's Chief Constable being based there. He recalls about four small cells, each about 6ft x 8ft. These would come replete with a low wooden bench 'bed' and a thin mattress. Heating was via a 4" iron pipe passing through the cell just above floor level. He recalls the Control Room with its plug-in telephone switchboard, Fingerprint and Photography Departments, a canteen and an Aliens Dept which handled immigration issues.

When the old station 'moved' across the St. Albans Road in 1970, the County HQ transferred to Stanborough, despite the new Hatfield Police Station being much larger than its predecessor. Jock's beat in the 1960s was the St. Albans Road area from the Police Station to the Cinema (later Bingo Hall). He took in parts of French Horn Lane and the old Recreation Ground. He worked three alternate shifts: 6am-2pm, 2pm-10pm, 10pm to 6am. At nights he would always 'shake hands' with shop door handles to check they were locked. Before 2-way radios were issued, communication between Officers on the beat and the Station, was largely by public telephone. On night shifts, particularly, Officers would stand next to a phone box at a pre-arranged (and variable) time. If the Station Sergeant wanted to speak to an Officer, he'd simply ring the phone box number. Jock says that generally he'd only wait 5 minutes or so for a call, before moving on.

By the late 60s 2-way radios had been introduced, but were not very reliable. His arrival in Hatfield was at a time when there was still much demolition and new building work happening in and around his beat. Despite the potential for looting, the foraging for scrap metal and theft of construction equipment, he recalls there were rarely any incidents reported. However, he made himself known to the construction workers.

The main problems he encountered were mainly for drink related public disorder incidents, usually associated with recently paid builders on a Friday and Saturday at the White Hart pub (now Town Inn). There were also the customary 'domestics' to attend to and thefts from motor vehicles. But the more serious burglars opted for richer pickings out of town. Another illegal pastime regularly occurred in the town centre after pub closing time. Drinkers would repair to Hatfield's first Chinese restaurant, the Golden Bird, eat their meal and run off without paying for it - hotly pursued by an irate procession of cooks and waiters wielding an impressive assortment of 'cutlery'. Usually these incidents were reported too late for Jock and his colleagues to join in the chase.

Jock was an imposing, strongly built six footer, and felt he had a reputation for being firm but fair. In those days a Policeman knew the people, many by name, that lived and worked on his beat. Accordingly little of note escaped his notice.

Although there was sometimes a physical element required to maintain law and order in 1960s Hatfield, there weren't the nastier sort of crimes that occur today. However, he would not wish to be in the Force now. Whereas today's police on the beat are heavily equipped, in the mid 1960s all Jock had was a truncheon and a torch. Officers weren't even issued with a whistle at the time!

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Jock Martin in 1965

Continued

Policing continued...

His first home here was a police house in Bradshaws, South Hatfield. He said he never had a problem Living and socialising in the town where he also policed within the community.

However, he did have a problem once when he was one of the guards, some armed with a revolver, providing 24 hour security for Britain's effective 'top policeman' back then, the Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling MP who lived in Essendon. Jock noticed the MP's son arrive, driving a Land Rover that wasn't displaying a road-tax disc. He reported this to Mrs Maudling and dutifully recorded the transgression. Shortly after, it appears that a few phone calls were made that caused pandemonium to break out at Hatfield Police Station. The upshot being that the Chief Constable got an ear-bashing that he passed on to the local Chief Inspector who, in turn, berated Jock.

The 'matter' was soon resolved.

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY FOR BISHOP'S HATFIELD SCHOOL

Celebrations Commemorate a Half Century of Teaching

On Saturday 11th September, hundreds of pupils, staff and parents - past, present and future - visited Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

The school, which opened as Hatfield Girls' Grammar in 1960, celebrated in style with a special lunch for old girls and an 'open afternoon' for visitors, followed by a band night.

Current Headteacher, Ms Theo Nickson, said the celebrations were 'a fantastic opportunity for past and present pupils and the local community to express their pride in the school, meet up with old friends and acknowledge the valuable contribution the school has made to the education of local girls'.

Visitors were able to see the school's current facilities, and even get involved in some lessons. Adrian Dudley, Deputy Head, who coordinated the celebrations said, 'it has been wonderful to see so many people here. Clearly Bishop's holds a special place, not only amongst its pupils but in the local community too. The architect who designed the school, John Onslow, is also here and that gives you a real sense of the school's history'.

The school had already held a number of activities over the year to celebrate. Pupils from local primary schools, De Havillands, St.Mary's and The Ryde visited the school and worked with Year 7 and Year 9 pupils. They also interviewed members of the Hatfield Local History Society who had lived in Hatfield in 1960. Pupils used newspaper cuttings from the former Hatfield Herald (later to become the Welwyn Hatfield Times) to make a display about Hatfield 50 years ago. A special exhibition was also prepared, in collaboration with Mill Green Museum showing something of Hatfield's history in the 1950s and 60s. One of the days highlights was the unveiling of a portrait of Miss Mary Ashworth, the school's first Headmistress who held the post for 24 years until Diana Press, Chairman of the Old Girls Association, took over in 1984. Diana said 'Mary Ashworth founded the School and set the high standards that have been maintained for 50 years. All parents and staff, past and present, owe her a great debt of gratitude'.



Grant Shapps, Mary Ashworth and mayor Howard Morgan with 50th Birthday cake

