

Dates for Your Diary

Thursday 8th Dec, 2.15 for a 2.30 start - Our Christmas Open Meeting. In line with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee next year the theme for this meeting will be "**Royal Occasions**", so come along with your memories and memorabilia.

Thursday 9th Feb, 2.15 for a 2.30 start - Gillian Gear "Industrial Schools"

Monday 12th March, 7.15 for a 7.30 start - Terry Ransome, "British Schools and the Legacy of J. Lancaster"

Thursday 12 April, 2.15 for a 2.30 start - A guided visit to St Etheldreda's Church. Arrangements to be announced in our next Newsletter.

Harpsfield Hall



Harpsfield Hall about 1900 after an illustration in H. Rider Haggard's book "Rural England"

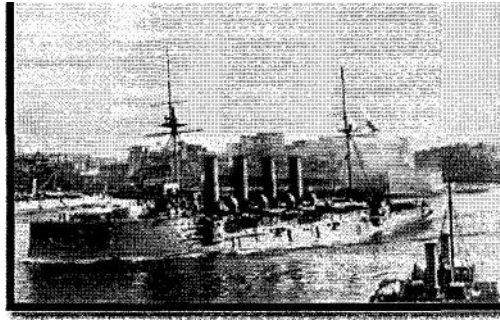
A recent search for information about Harpsfield Hall/Manor, for a family history enquiry, found information in the "Hatfield & Its People" booklets. The site of the Manor was originally in the Parish of St Peters on the west side of the Barnet By Pass (now Comet Way) but with boundary changes was incorporated into the Parish of Hatfield.

Book 9 "Farming Yesterday and Today", tells us that in the 1850's there was a mixed farm here keeping sheep, cows, pigs and poultry. In 1863 Mr James Sinclair took over the farm and changed its farming practices, keeping very few animals and growing crops instead with potatoes being a speciality. Mr Sinclair was a hardworking man who paid his employees' wages that were higher than the average. In 1901 H. Rider Haggard visited the farm and described it as "One of the best cultivated and managed farms in Hertfordshire"

Book 12 "The Twentieth Century", relates that after a bad period for farming Harpsfield Hall Farm was sold in 1930 to de Havillands. The land was intended for an airfield and flying school. Sadly the Hall being in the middle of the site was obliterated. Twenty years later when constructing a new runway, levelling gear was put out of action by the submerged threshold of the farmhouse.

Today the only reminder of the hall and farm is the shopping parade "Harpsfield Broadway"

Gunner David Page and the HMS Aboukir



HMS Aboukir

While browsing the 1914 Hatfield Parish Magazines looking for information for the Society's WW1 project, we came across the first Roll of Honour to be published by the magazine in October 1914, it listed "David Page gunner of White Gate, Hatfield, who served aboard the Aboukir and was not on the list of survivors".

By coincidence, my wife Chris, happened to mention that her mother had a plaque which commemorated the Aboukir. Chris's Great Uncle was a Royal Marine who served on the HMS Aboukir before WW1, he died in 1910 and was buried in Malta.



The HMS Aboukir was a Cressy-class armoured cruiser. She was built in Scotland in 1902, and by the start of the war, (due to greatly improved ship design), this class of ship was almost obsolete. The Aboukir along with her two sister ships the Cressy and the Hogue, were put into action patrolling an area off the North Sea. The ships were slow and not zigzagging (a defence against torpedoes), on the 23rd of September 1914 at 6.25am they were spotted and attacked by the German U-boat, U9; HMS Aboukir was hit by a torpedo (which caused her to list and sink in about 0.5 hour). The captain thought that they had hit a mine, and called for the other two ships to help save the men in the water, the result was that both the Cressy and the Hogue were also sunk with a total loss of 1459 lives, of which David Page was one. He was one of the first of many Hatfield men to have been listed as Killed in Action.

To read the full the story of HMS Aboukir go to <http://www.worldwar1.co.uk/cressy.htm>.
Picture of HMS Aboukir courtesy of Wikipedia.

Derek Martindale