

## HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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### HITLER'S HOLIDAY SNAPS OF HATFIELD

In the year before the outbreak of WW2, Ben French was a trainee ground engineer at the De Havilland aerodrome. His job was to service aircraft engines and approve them for flight. One winters day he saw a German civil aircraft pass over the De Havilland site and recorded the event in his diary on Wednesday 19th January 1938.

His entry read: "*Junkers machine circled Hatfield*"

Ben also noted the plane's ID number - JU 52. It was a three engined Junkers which had suspiciously veered from its Berlin to Croydon aerodrome flight path to snap Hatfield in the uncertain times that led to war, as the Germans began compiling an aerial photographic map of Britain to help their pilots identify targets in the event of hostilities; and the De Havilland aircraft company were certainly one of them. These photos became known as 'Hitler's holiday snaps'. At the time, Germany was well ahead of Britain with this type of reconnaissance, and at least two photos of Hatfield were taken and, incredibly, Ben French saw them do it. One photo is partially revealed below.

Ben noted:

*The Junkers airliner flew over Hatfield. An Albatross [DH plane] standing on the aerodrome was quickly taken into the hangar. Was this a spy flight?*

The 1938 photograph also clearly shows Smallford's oval speedway track to the left with vehicle access gained from the Hatfield - St.Albans Road and sited between what is now Notcutts Garden Centre (partially obscured by the writing to the left) and Popefield Farm - closer to the right. The Ellenbrook residential roads can also be seen to the bottom right.



A Junkers 52

Used for reconnaissance over Hatfield. Ben believes it was possibly an aircraft belonging to Deutsche Lufthansa



#### Contact the Editors:

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Chairman: **Mrs Chris Martindale**



## THE HATFIELD PIRATES

In our recent book, *Rock Around The Block*, band pianist Dick Whittingham mentions *The Pirates* - “a local concert party group consisting mainly of local shopkeepers” who he recalls performing in the old Public Hall during the early days of WW2. But HLHS member Janet Robinson (nee Tingey) provides more detailed information about them:

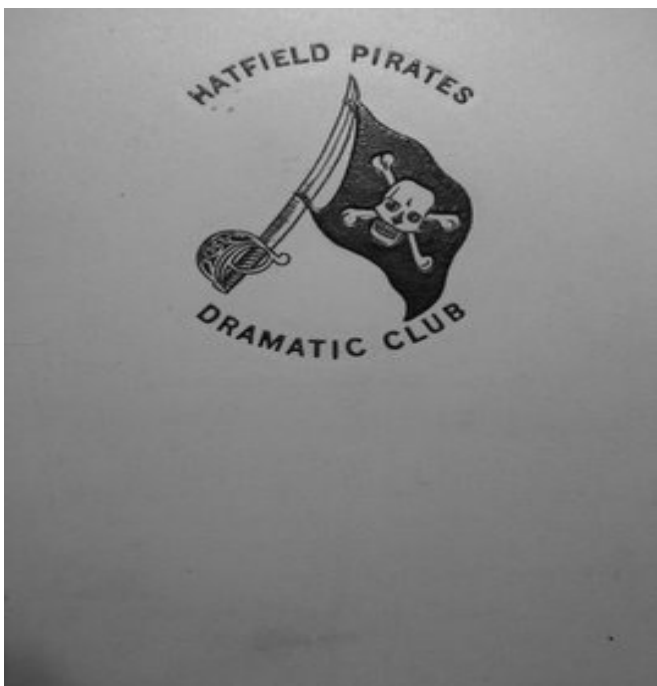
My father, Randall Tingey, became a member of the Pirates early in the Club’s life. Not heard of the Pirates? I have beside me a formal description which appears to come from a local magazine. “Hatfield possesses a band of pirates which is brightened by tales of good deeds”. It describes how early in May 1924 a group of young men dressed as pirates visited the neighbouring villages, entertaining as they went, “noising abroad the advent of a great fete”.

At this fete, at which HRH the Duchess of York was present, which was held, I believe, in the grounds of Hatfield House, the pirates boarded all passing cars commanding them to “stand and deliver”. That was the first of many fetes in which the Pirates participated.

Randall said that the Elizabethan Revels and fete was held in about 1926. “We dressed up as Pirates - blue shirts, while trousers and red scarves round our heads and we had brass earrings. We had a lorry, put a piano on it and used to go round Shenley, London Colney and all the villages singing all sorts of old songs to advertise the fete”. The Club not only helped many good causes but gave its members “plenty of healthy recreation in the form of dances, debates, lectures and mock-trials.”

Mr. Peart started the Club and interested Lord Cranborne who became the Admiral. C. Nairn, R. Drage, W. Day and E. Smith helped considerably in the early days. A Mrs. Hoskins was the club secretary.

They met in the Reading Room next to St Luke’s Church. Members were initiated in true pirate fashion: blindfolded and made to walk the plank. But only to fall on a mattress. At the end of it Lord Cranborne, made a mark on each initiate’s head and spoke a few words. My father said that as Lord Cranborne lisped, it sounded like: “I now bwand you a Piwate.”



Eric Tingey and his brother Rex were also members. He said that every Saturday night they had a dance and a teacher came over from St Albans to teach them to dance properly. “At the dances we had girls - the Hill girls, the Richardsons and Peggy Scarborough (later Simmons)” They played table tennis and other games. Sometimes there was a little horseplay when gas mantles got smashed or a window broken and once they fused all the lights while playing football indoors. But “we were not really rough, just a bit wild”, said Randall. “There was a hockey section and a football team was formed.

Our colours were blue shirt, white shorts and red stockings. We played in the mid-Herts league for a number of seasons. Travel was usually by a Tingey's Corner House van which on one occasion finished up in a ditch with no damage to it or us". Eric said that sometimes his brother Rex used to drive the team to the away matches in the sweeps' van. "How they kept clean I can't think and there couldn't have been much room in it".

A drama section was formed and had, as members, some well known names like E.F Benson, the novelist and Robert Speaight the actor. Well known local people also took part. George Gilbert, Spencer Barnes and Willy Hill amongst others. The company staged a number of well-known (then) farces at the Public Hall.

(a) Ladies and Gentlemen willing to take part in the Club's dramatic productions: subscriptions 2/6 pa entrance fee 5/-

(b) Ladies and Gentlemen not wishing to take part in such productions, but willing in any way to promote the welfare of the Club. Nominal subscription 1/- per annum.

The magazine article was accompanied by a photograph of the football team for 1928-9. I do not know when the Club closed not do I know if girls took part other than in the drama section or as admirers of the male Pirates. But it clearly provided much fun and occupation for the Hatfield male teenagers of the twenties.



**Hatfield Pirates F.C.1928-29**

G.W.Scott   Rex Tingey   Sid Hollier   Reg Simmons   Spencer Barnes

J Barnes   J Wright   F Haines



1952

## Hatfield Technical College Nears Completion

Photo provided by H.Tempest  
c/o Hatfield Library



The Queen's Diamond Jubilee won't be the only Diamond anniversary event commemorated in Hatfield this year! Higher education is also 60 years old because, in 1952, the Hatfield Technical College opened; courtesy of a gift of 90 acres from the de Havilland aircraft company's Chairman and financier, Alan S. Butler. The land was given, in perpetuity, for educational use. Herts County Council then built and operated the college which became a centre for mechanical and aeronautical engineering for Hatfield's then dominant aviation industry. The site also accommodated Hatfield Grammar School.

Then, in 1969, the Technical College became a Polytechnic before being granted university status in 1992.

In September, the University are organising a Diamond Jubilee Graduation & Reunion event for all those who graduated at the 'Tech' and 'Poly' before the University existed.

Final details aren't available at the time of printing, so interested parties should enquire by calling the University on 01707 284000.

The above aerial photo shows part of the residential road infrastructure being laid, before the housing was built, around the Bishops Rise, Hazel Grove and Hawthorns areas in South Hatfield.

The Barnet By-pass is clearly seen, running diagonally, at the bottom right of the photo.

**Obituary** It is with sadness that we report the death of Vera Whittingham, on July 29th, aged 92. Vera lived in Hatfield all her life until moving nearer to her son in 2011. Vera and her late husband Dick both greatly contributed recollections for our archives.