

*From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history*

## HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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### FIREMARK PLAQUES



Sun Fire Office plaque at Chantry Lane cottage    Another Sun Fire Office example

The above photos are 'Firemarks' of the Sun Fire Office insurers. The one to the left is affixed to a very old cottage in Chantry Lane, reportedly once a forge and the site of one of Hatfield's oldest homes. Whilst the cottage has undoubtedly been rebuilt over time, the present owners - who moved there in 1973 - say that a house has stood there since 1590. Their Firemark plaque (pictured) was there when they bought the cottage. It is one example of a plaque issued by the Sun Fire Office insurance company who operated from 1706 to 1959 before merging with Alliance in 1960.

The Vintage Coach website states:

'Before the advent of fire insurance, the only assistance available to the owner of a property damaged by fire was through a 'Brief' in church. The parson drew the parishioners' attention each Sunday to specific causes of want or hardship in the parish in the hope that his flock would help the needy financially. Naturally, this was totally inadequate in the event of a large fire, and most of the loss had to be borne by the unfortunate owner of the damaged property. In the reign of Charles II the disastrous losses resulting from the Great Fire of London in 1666 brought into being the first societies for insurance against loss or damage of property by fire.'

Whilst it is possible that the plaque on the cottage was affixed for cosmetic purposes, does anyone know of any others in Hatfield?

## HATFIELD's ROYAL BRITISH LEGION CLUB



In December 1961 the social club affiliated to the British Legion was opened by guest of honour, the novelist Barbara Cartland. Sited behind the Hilltop shopping centre in The Downs, the club has been a popular watering hole for over half a century.

It underwent a substantial refurbishment two years ago, but is currently closed while new management issues are addressed.

Of those pictured, the 2nd person to the left of Ms Cartland (centre) is Mr Gibson, of local solicitors Maybury & Gibson. 1st right by the bar stool is John Brodie, next to him is George Reynolds and then Mrs Doreen Sloan (standing). The latter all being club members and near neighbours in Cherry Way, South Hatfield.

*Photo provided by Lenny Brandon*

## SMALLFORD STATIONMASTER

*With this year being the centenary of the outbreak of the WW1, the following article from the Hertfordshire News of January 14th 1920 gives a local glimpse of that time:*

The retirement on the last day of the year of Mr Thomas North, till recently Stationmaster at Smallford on the GNR branch from St.Albans to Hatfield, brings to an end a career in the service of the railway. Approaching 70 years old, Mr North even now blames the worry of the war (WW1) as though it were necessary to excuse himself the fact that he is retiring. Great strain was imposed on Mr North due to the influx of soldiers into the district during the war, embarking and disembarking at Smallford station. This has led to ill health and a need to retire.

During his 46 year service with the GNR, Mr North was on duty every Sunday and every Christmas Day and no respite came until during the war when the Company suspended the Sunday service. Smallford is a lonely place, and Mr North's period of service there was of an

uneventful nature. The only excitements to come his way were meets of the Beagles and Staghounds until the outbreak of the war. Smallford, in common with so many other quiet English country places, became the scene of military activity - as many as 20,000 soldiers were stationed for training in the neighbourhood. This involved, of course, a huge increase in the traffic of the station. After the hard work he has put in dealing with this traffic, Mr North looks forward to a hard earned rest with obvious pleasure.



Left: The Stationmaster's house is still standing within O'Shea's builders yard at Smallford.

Right: An engine with four carriages pulls into Smallford station; which could only accommodate two!



*Photos from the archives at [www.smallford.org](http://www.smallford.org)*

### **A 1950s RECOLLECTION OF HOLLIER'S DAIRY FIELD**

By David Jewell

In 1954 the field at the top of Briars Lane, where the playing fields are now and where Roe Hill Hall is built, belonged to Hollier's Dairies, and it was pasture land which they used to graze their horses. I was ten years old and went to Dellfield School. On our way home Mick Edmonds, John Barclay and myself would take a detour to ride the horses that were in the field. We would help each other to get on.

One evening there was a knock on the door and my father opened it to find Arthur Prior, foreman at Hollier's Dairies standing there, asking for me.

I never found out how he knew that it was us riding his horses but he did and he proceeded to explain how these horses were cart horses, there for a rest, and that riding them was dangerous, both to us and the horses.

There was also another horse in the field that we never managed to get near let alone ride. Arthur Prior explained that this horse was "Golden Boy" a thoroughbred show horse and Mr Hollier's pride and joy.

We were invited down to Hollier's Dairies in French Horn Lane to see the horses in their stables, to see the milk bottling plant, and to apologise to Mr Hollier for riding on his horses. In those days milk bottles were recycled, the empties being collected by the milkmen, washed out, sterilized, and refilled. The tops were cardboard disks pressed into the bottles, later to be replaced by silver, red and gold aluminium foil tops, crimped on.

We saw the show cart which was used by Golden Boy. The cart was pristine; all hand painted and sign written. Apparently this horse was a real champion winning lots of shows, and you could tell by the way it picked its feet up when trotting that this was no ordinary cart horse. Our Milkman was Bert Wade, and I used make a fuss of his horse and ended up helping the milkman to deliver to houses on our estate.

One day we were delivering in Croft Field, it was raining and as I went to jump up on the cart my foot slipped off the step and I hit the horses back leg, and it moved off. I fell under the front wheel and was run over. Bert saw what had happened and pulled me out before the back wheel arrived.

I was taken home in a neighbour's push chair with blood pouring from my knees. My mother had a fit, but luckily nothing was broken. This episode brought another visit from Arthur Prior, this time with a lecture on why children and milk-carts do not go together.

## SELLING AN AIRCRAFT

There were, of course, many varied roles in the aircraft manufacturing business at Hatfield, from the initial design through to construction. But the whole purpose of the enterprise was that the aircraft were all built to be sold; and in an increasingly competitive market.

As good fortune had it, one of the guests we met at the beacon ceremony back in September, was dapper HLHS member and DH veteran Stuart McKay. We asked about his role in the aviation industry at Hatfield, and discovered that he was involved with the intriguing business of selling aircraft. Although much of what Stuart did was - and remains – confidential, he told us;

“At Hatfield some potential customers came to the factory and in other cases targets were identified. Lots of analysis persuading that a certain type of aircraft was for them would be originated and sent off as a cold call or on request. Negotiations moving towards a Memorandum of Understanding, for example might take time before contract discussions could be entertained.

The Chinese Trident and 146 sales were before my time but involved masses of high level work.

I was involved with a section called Operations Support which went into action when a potential or actual customer wanted very specific details of the operation of the aircraft over certain routes or from particular airfields. We were called upon to help when some of the high level discussions were in trouble or when particular issues needed to be resolved. The Contracts department was the one which got involved with pricing and deliveries and options and it was they who chased the signatures.”

“Once a contract had been signed and a sale confirmed there was a HUGE amount of follow-up action. This involved DH reps going to the operator’s base in advance of the arrival of the first aircraft and staying on after; masses of support generated by the production of manuals and technical documents and warranties covering the basic aeroplane and all the items of bought-in equipment which may be peculiar to that one operator; engineers and crews going through the school at Hatfield or instructors going out to the customer’s facilities.....the sale of one aeroplane caused as much work as for a company which bought a whole fleet. I was involved with the 146 and to some extent with the 125 (a whole new raft of matters as these mostly were one-off sales to private companies) but Trident sales were all very complicated.”

Stuart also recalled a time when “the Farnborough Air Show was so important that there were daily television reports in the evening and occasionally news that ‘so and so signed a contract for 20 ‘whizjets’ at Farnborough today....’ Well that was all PR hype of course. All the serious matters had been going on for months and the signing under the floodlights was simply an act of showmanship. Nobody ever just sat down and said they liked the colour of that aeroplane with three engines so decided to buy a dozen!”



A Hawker Siddeley Trident.  
It’s first flight was in 1962.