

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 98 September 2015

150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE HATFIELD - ST. ALBANS BRANCH LINE

HLHS members may recall that a Smallford community group were awarded a grant, in 2012, to research the historic aspects of their former branch line station. The railway project grew and spread further afield as more information was found.

And, literally 3 years down the line, the group - including Hatfield members - are to stage a celebratory weekend on the old track in October. Full details are within this issues insert. And in preparation of this, Mike Izzard, a Hatfield man with a big heart, has transformed the former Nast Hyde Halt at Ellenbrook. Mike has meticulously cropped the dense ivy that covers the old platform; he has laid turf alongside the old track bed (now the Alban Way) and installed a charming signal post with an information board - replete with two hanging flower baskets.! He also created a Nast Hyde railway totem and fixed it to



A great effect - but signals weren't used on the old line



The last waiting room at Nast Hyde Halt

a tree together with a warning sign.

In fact, the old platform has probably never looked so good. Whilst the 6 mile branch line first opened in October 1865, the Nast Hyde platform was built in 1910 (at a cost of £455) to serve the manorial Great Nast Hyde House nearby, its farm and the emerging new residential areas at Ellenbrook.

It is also believed that GNR Director Oliver Bury, who lived nearby, had the halt built to aid his own commute to London. The platform was originally made of timber - quite possibly railway sleepers - like other stops on the line. It was later rebuilt with dark blue engineering bricks, as seen today.

A small waiting room with glass windows and trackside roof overhang, was later replaced by the 'bus shelter' style seen pictured. This was finally removed

In 1988 some 18 years after the rails were lifted - and 37 years since the last passenger train stopped there.

Freight trains continued until the end of December 1968.

For more information, visit:

www.smallford.org



...But not for the past 47 years!

Contact the Editors:

c/o Mill Green Museum, Hatfield, AL9 5PD

Chairman: **Mrs Chris Martindale**



Carter's Pond

A Historic Supply of Water to Hatfield House and the Old Town

On a local internet forum recently, there was some discussion about the reservoirs in Hatfield Park which were used to supply the House with water. Partial bits of information and generalised recollections warranted some further investigation to enable us to put more flesh on the bones of this particular story. Most were aware of the concrete reservoir, roughly 25 yards square, known as Carter's Pond. And some knew of a smaller reservoir close by. Both of them are now disused and are havens for wildlife.

Hatfield House Archivist, Robin Harcourt Williams, kindly provided this account:

"In response to your inquiry, I have looked into the history of Carter's Pond.

At present the "pond" consists of two ponds, although in the past the number has varied. It is perhaps more precise to call them reservoirs, which is how they are marked on the first edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1879.

Carter's Pond has existed for several centuries. A single pond is marked on an estate map of 1785 (CPM Supp. 64) when it had a fairly natural-looking, irregular shape. It was fed by a stream coming from Millwards Park.

The earliest mention of the pond which I have come across occurs in a valuation of timber growing in Hatfield Park, carried out in 1669 (General 47/28). The document lists a number of oaks and elms which had been "marked by Carter's Pond". There is an earlier bill for "fishing the pond at Richard Carter's" in 1641 (Bills 203). Richard Carter rented a house and 16 acres of land from Lord Salisbury in the 1640s and 1650s. However it cannot be established for certain whether or not today's ponds owe their name to him.

In the 1860s and 1870s various changes were made to the water supply to Hatfield House. Several different ponds in the Park were linked together by pipes, being fed by water pumped from the Sawmill on the River Lea. A plan of 1872 (Estate Office plans C1) shows three Carter's Ponds, the third one being a small cattle pond. Another plan, made three years later in July 1875 (Estate Office plans C1) shows that the ponds had been changed by then to their current rectangular shape.

No doubt it was at that time that they were lined with concrete and filters were installed. They were fed both by piped water from the Sawmill and by a pipe from Halfway Oak Pond in Millward's Park.

The ponds were used as a reservoir to supply water by separate iron pipes to cattle sheds and to the gardens, and also to Hatfield House. An important function was to ensure a good supply to the House in case of fire. I am not sure when the House was connected to the mains but I imagine that it was probably at some time between the two world wars."

In past centuries, most stately houses were located far from towns and so had to be self sufficient in the provision water. But not all could get a gravity fed supply from nearby hills; many had to have it pumped to them from rivers, wells or springs up to tanks high up in 'water' towers or tanks in roof spaces.



The larger of the two concrete Carter's Ponds which supplied water to Hatfield House

From the sixteenth century manual pumps were used, as were horse or donkey powered pumps, and pumps driven by water wheels. In 1772 John Whitehurst invented a manually controlled 'pulsation engine' to pump water uphill. Then, in 1796, Joseph Montgolfier invented the original self-acting ram pump which took its power from the flow of a river. Both of these designs were acquired, in 1820, by engineer Josiah Easton whose company improved the technology to create their 'hydraulic ram'. Lord Salisbury had one installed on the River Lea by the Sawmill to supply Hatfield House, some $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile distant. These rams could take a fairly low head of pressure to pump a smaller quantity of water to a much higher level. The Hatfield Park system included the laying of 6 inch diameter cast iron pipes underground, in an arc, from the Sawmill, following the Long Ride track, through Conduit Wood and across the Deer Park and up to the concrete Carter's Pond reservoir(s) sited about 400 yards south of the House. Six Venturi pressure valves (see photo) were installed intermittently along the pipe run. These could expel excess air pressure through a small vent. The pipe that fed the reservoir can still be seen atop a six foot high brick pillar.

At the bottom of the pond, three concrete compartments were staggered in height to enable the water to filter through each compartment which *probably* held gravel, charcoal and sand. This process purified it to the extent that it was drinkable.

The water was then gravity fed downhill to the House.

Brian Tott, who began work on the Estate in the early 1950s, recalled that a standpipe also once dispensed this filtered water at the bottom of the Jacobs Ladder steps in the Old Town.

By 1882 the 3rd Marquis had installed "*a turbine and dynamo in an old sawmill*" to generate electricity to provide lighting for Hatfield House - Turbine Cottage, by the sawmill, is a reminder of this. However, the hydram was not replaced by a pump. But in c1980, an attempt to replenish Carters Pond using an electrical pump at the river - with new 2 inch pipes - failed to produce enough of a flow rate to supply the pond. And during WW2, recovering soldiers hospitalized at the House, used the pond as a swimming pool. HLHS member Ron Price recalls changing huts and diving board being there.



Left: The actual standpipe that once supplied water to the Old Town from the Carter's Pond reservoir.

Right: One of the Venturi valves which can still be seen in the Park.

HATFIELD'S WAR MEMORIAL REPAIRED



**Dedication ceremony held
On June 12th 1921**



**Corroded column as of
May 2015**



**Replacement column
installed July 2015**

Earlier this year, a community led fundraising initiative raised almost £4500 to repair the badly weathered Portland stone central column of our War Memorial. And on Sunday August 16th a re-dedication service took place, 94 years after the monument was installed. The names of William Larkin and John Scrope are also to be added to the memorial plaque.

NEW BOOK ABOUT De HAVILLAND'S



Aircraft enthusiast John Clifford came to work in Hatfield three years ago, and for the past two he has been writing a book that chronicles life in Hatfield before and after the arrival of aviation to the town in 1930. His research concentrates on the period from 1910 to 1935. John is the son of an RAE Farnborough apprentice, and his boyhood bedroom ceiling was covered with model aircraft. He has lived most of his life in Norfolk, surrounded by former RAF and USAAF stations but has an early but clear memory from the 1970s of passing the replica Comet racer that fronted the Hatfield factory site for many years. He also graciously acknowledges help received from HLHS members.

The book, *de Havilland and Hatfield, 1910-1935*, by John Clifford, is available at £16.99 and published by Fonthill Media.

John explains:

The de Havilland Aircraft Co, already an international business, opened an aerodrome in 1930 on farmland which it acquired to the west of Hatfield. But significant events had already brought aircraft over the town, often de Havillands, for the past twenty years. The company's School of Flying was the first operation to take up residence. Flying clubs moved in and recreational facilities were developed. Garden parties, aerobatic displays and national air races were hosted. Regular visitors included famous flyers, royalty and aristocracy, actors and actresses, politicians, senior military ranks and representatives from Britain's other great aircraft manufacturers.

Throughout 1934, new buildings were constructed to house de Havilland's global headquarters, factory production and Aeronautical Technical School. The victory of the sleek, red Comet in the England-Australia air race that October would have lasting significance for the town, which grew to accommodate the de Havilland workforce. The legendary Tiger Moth and iconic airliners such as the Dragon Rapide came off the production lines. Increasing numbers of RAF pilots were trained by the School of Flying while the garden parties, flying displays and air races continued. Military aircraft contracts were getting larger as long shadows from Europe reached the town.



Leonard Reid and James Ayling with their DH.84 Dragon, 'Trail of the Caribou', at Hatfield in August 1934 and interviewed by the media after completing the first non-stop flight from Canada to England.



Lois Butler sitting in front of her husband's DH.85 Leopard Moth, which she piloted, during the 1933 Kings Cup national air race at Hatfield. Alan Butler, Chairman of de Havilland, was in the cabin with her.