

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 115 December 2019

IT'S HELLO AND GOODBYE IN THE TOWN CENTRE

Within the space of a few recent weeks we had the long awaited completion of a £1.2m transformation phase of White Lion Square. Part of the works included the return of James Butler's sculpture now known as 'Pearl', which was commissioned in the early 1960s. It was referred to at the time as a 'Reclining nude in a shell'.

We covered James' story about it in March 2012 where he wrote:

"I suppose, subconsciously, the idea sprang from Botticelli's The Birth of Venus painting; It is very beautiful and depicts Venus standing in a shell, born from the sea. My intention was to create the idea of a pearl in the oyster"

For many years the sculpture sat in a large oval water pool in White Lion Square but was later unceremoniously moved into dry dock within the grounds of the former Hatfield School off Travellers Lane.

The Burgess family generously gave Pearl a clean-up prior to its return.

But it was a fond adieu to the former

Tingey's furniture store which opened in 1920 on the St. Albans Road in the town centre. One wonders how many local homes Tingey's supplied with furniture as the New Town began taking shape from the late 1940s.

But over time the building variously became a Texas DIY store, Pizza Hut, Antiques Emporium and Whites of Cheltenham. A block of flats are set to be built on the site.



Hello again, Pearl. You're back where you belong



The view in 1920



And 99 years later, the end is nigh.

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Chairman: **Phil Marris**



THE IRON DUKE's SEAL OF APPROVAL

Sandra Hallett, a local lady with an interest in history, wanted to learn more about a small glazed (6" x 5") cabinet which she owns containing a red wax disc mounted on card with the misspelt inscription: *Crest of the Great Duke of Wellington.*

We contacted the curator at Apsley House, the former home of the Duke of Wellington but now a museum dedicated to him. The Curator explained that the disc was "very interesting" but that it was a seal - not a family crest - and identified the embossed image as being a single scene from the 13 metre long Daniel McAlise 'cartoon' depicting the Duke shaking hands with the Prussian General Blucher after their victory over Napoleon at Waterloo.



Above: A coloured image from the 1859 McAlise cartoon which hangs in the House of Commons. Left: The red wax seal

Following this, Wellington became a great national hero and it is felt the seal was one of many mementos made during his lifetime to commemorate his achievements. And well before Waterloo and becoming a Duke, Arthur Wellesey was a regular visitor to Hatfield House in the late 1700s and rode to hounds with Lady Emily, the 1st

Marchioness. She was also in charge of the Hatfield Hounds and favoured wearing a 'sky blue riding habit' when out hunting; the colour becoming known as 'Salisbury blue' and can still be seen on many estate front doors nowadays.

There is an account of the Marchioness gifting Wellington a blue riding coat which he would wear when hunting at Hatfield. And House Archivist Robin Harcourt Williams recalls the 'credible tradition that he sometimes wore that blue coat during the Peninsular war' - this being a successful campaign leading up to the final battle at Waterloo..... where he is also depicted wearing a blue riding coat! But, perhaps, it is fanciful to imagine it being the same one! The Iron Duke's Hatfield

connection continues further as Wellington's brother married the daughter of the 1st Marquess of Salisbury, and the descendant of the Duke's horse at Waterloo, the charger *Copenhagen*, is buried by the old Palace within the grounds of Hatfield House.



Lady Emily in her blue riding 'habit'

Wellington at Waterloo

WHEN BUFFALO BILL ROLLED INTO TOWN (AND HIGH TAILED STRAIGHT THROUGH)

By Roger Taylor

On Wednesday June 22nd 1904, Buffalo Bill arrived in St. Albans with his world famous Wild West Show for a performance at St. Stephens Hill next to the LNWR station. A temporary arena was constructed to hold thousands of people and the show ran twice daily.

Featured in the show were American Indians, Russian Cossacks, and English Lancers - in all, a cast of 800 people and 500 horses. What a fantastic spectacle for 1904!!

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show toured the length and breadth of the country and was a huge event. In order to transport this enormous undertaking, the show travelled by train, nearly

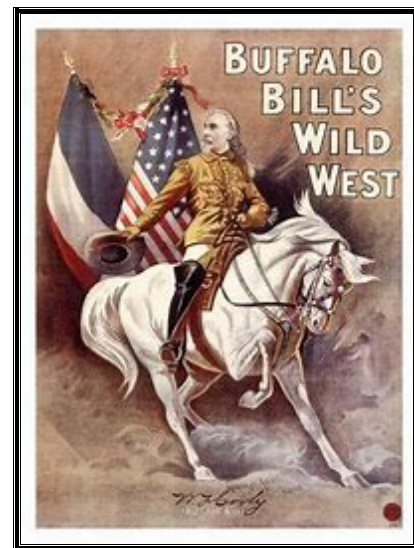
always at night to avoid what would be considerable disruption to ordinary services. On June 20th the show was at Chelmsford and on the 21st at Ilford. From there the trains travelled to Watford Junction and thence to St. Albans L.N.W.R. The trains consisted of 50 heavy railcars. Bill brought with him 500 horses and 800 men and women along with tents and showground essentials. All were parked in the emptied sidings at the station on Wednesday morning 22nd June (St. Albans Day).

Each of the THREE trains required two engines to take the show on to Hatfield for the next date in Hitchin (June 23rd) and then Cambridge (June 24th). What a logistical nightmare!!

Extra staff were brought in from Willesden to organise the shunting at the Abbey Station. Presumably the show entourage slept on the train.

There were two shows at St. Albans (in a field adjacent to the station) and then the whole ensemble moved on to Hatfield, the first train leaving at 12.28am, the second at 2.02am and the third at 3.24am. How the bridges on the line coped with this heavy traffic is anybody's guess.

What an unforgettable sight this must all have been.



A Life in Hatfield For One Young Lady - And Three Near Misses

HLHS member Barbara Savill kindly gave us her recollections:

Barbara was born in Stockbreach Road in 1930. Her parents had lived next door to each other as youngsters; a family story tells of a time her mother saw her father laying at the side of the road after hurting himself. She picked him up and took him home. This could have been the start of their romance!

Barbara's mother was a cook in a big house at Bengo. She told Barbara that she used to 'code' her recipes to avoid them being copied, by writing the last ingredient at the top of the next recipe on the list! She gave up work to care for her own mother when she was ill. Barbara's dad worked as a self-employed gardener in Brookman's Park. He had lost a leg at the Somme during WW1 – but still cycled to work.

Hatfield Park was a favourite childhood play area for Barbara and her friends, and she went to her first film showing at the Public Hall, at the age of five.

As a child Barbara's doctor was Dr Holmes. She remembers attending his surgery which was in a cellar, where his bulldogs would lay on the floor of the consulting room! There was a bench all the way around the wall in the waiting room. The doctor would mix up his own cough medicines for patients. When bombs were dropped on de Havillands during a German air raid on 3rd October 1940, Barbara (then aged 10) was at Dellfield school. The plane could be heard as it approached. One of the children saw it and shouted "It's got a swastika on it!" They soon heard the explosion and could feel the vibrations from it.

The teachers made the children sit in the corridor and wait for their parents to collect them. Barbara's family had a lodger, named George, who initially came for three months to work at de Havillands – and stayed for 30 years! He was at the factory when it was bombed, and helped to pull people from the wreckage.

As she lived in Stockbreach Road throughout the war years, Barbara was also close to the bombs which dropped on Selwyn Crescent and St. Audrey's school.



Barbara and fellow pupils saw a Junkers 88 bomber flying low over her school toward the De Havilland's aircraft factory. The raid killed 21 workers and injured a further 70.



The plane was hit by an Anti Aircraft battery and finally came down in Cole Green.

At 14 Barbara left school. She had a Saturday job babysitting for a local family. She would look after their two-year-old son Duncan, and take him for walks.

With the war still on at the time, her father wouldn't allow her to work in London because of the bomb risk, so she sought work in Hatfield. Her first full time job was at Jack Oldings where she was Post Girl. Her boss was Mr. Ayre. Barbara stayed at the company for twenty years. She enjoyed socialising with work colleagues, and recalls that the canteen at Jack Oldings doubled up as a social club, with a bar at weekends. The firm would take the workers on coach outings, one of these was to the London Palladium to see a show called 'Holding Hands'. It was a special performance laid on just for Jack Oldings staff.

The Jack Olding company contributed to the war effort with its construction of heavy-duty vehicles. Barbara remembers tanks, bulldozers and Vickers tractors being made there.

Ballroom dancing was a favourite leisure activity of Barbara's, and she went to regular events at the Old Palace in Hatfield Park, and at Parkway in Welwyn Garden City. She remembers RAF personnel stationed at Mill Green attending the dances. She also went to the de Havilland's dances, and it was at one of these that she met her future husband Derek, who worked at Marconi. He proposed by telling her that he would get a bigger wage packet as a married man! The day before her wedding, Barbara's workmates at Jack Oldings took her bike and decorated it with coloured paper. She was married in 1954. Derek went to East Africa with the army two months after their wedding.

The couple were not eligible for a council house as Barbara's parents had a three-bedroom home, so a spare room was effectively available to them. A friend told them of a house for sale in Stanborough; no. 46 Bocket Road. It had been rented out for a while and was in need of renovation. They bought it for £2,000 in 1956 (*now worth £520,000*). After five years, they moved to No. 96 in the same road – a bigger, detached house, as starting a family was imminent. Barbara and Derek got a mortgage to buy the house for £5,000, and lived there until 2008. They had two children, David and Brenda, both now in their fifties. Barbara, now aged 89, lives in North Herts.



Barbara received this Christmas card from the Jack Oldings Company in 1953



Dates for your Diary

Mon. 9 Dec. 2019 (2.15 p.m. – 4 p.m.) – Christmas social meeting:

– please bring along items of interest for others to look at.

Mon. 9 Mar. 2020 (2.15 p.m. for 2.30 p.m.) – talk by Eric McLaughlin, Hatfield House (topic t.b.d.)

Mon. 8 Jun. 2020 (7.15 p.m. for 7.30 p.m.) – AGM followed by talk:

– “The decline of the many inns of St Albans” by Jon Mein (with some Hatfield inns as well)

Mon. 13 Jul. 2020 (2.15 p.m. – 4 p.m.) – Summer social meeting

Mon. 14 Sep. 2020 (7.15 p.m. for 7.30 p.m.) – talk (speaker t.b.d.)

Mon. 14 Dec. 2020 (2.15 p.m. – 4 p.m.) – Christmas social meeting

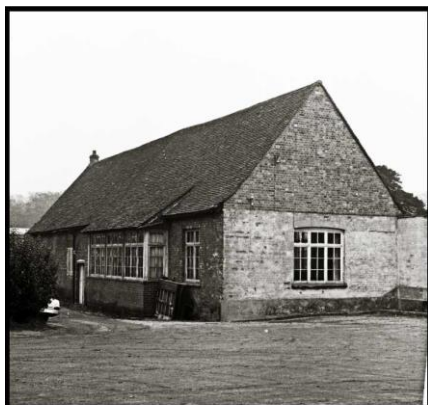
Meetings are held at Friendship House, Wellfield Close, AL10 0BU. Non-members are welcome.
Entrance: £1 for members, £2 for non-members.

Please note: Wellfield Close is now subject to **daytime parking restrictions**, which mean that afternoon-parking without a permit will risk a parking ticket. The car park to the side of Friendship House will take ten cars (fourteen, if double-parked). Members are therefore asked to park their cars tidily in order to maximise the space available. The nearest other car park is in The Common.

Do you recognise these views of Old Hatfield? (cont'd)

Members may recall some unknown Hatfield photos in the September 2019 newsletter. Robin Harcourt Williams was able to identify three of them: No 88 – Station Lodge and the two adjoining houses (62-66 Great North Road) viewed from inside the Park; No 89 – East India House (10 Fore Street), printed in reverse; No 90 – St. Audrey’s in Church Street, the former Rectory which is now a nursing home.

Below are more unknowns. Please email contact@hatfieldhistory.uk if you can identify them.



No 91 (1968)



No 92 (1968)



No 93 (1968)



No 94 (1968)



No 95 (1968)



No 96 (1968)

Memories of National Service and de Havilland

Hazel Bell (who indexes our newsletters) discovered recently that, years earlier, an old friend of hers, Michael, had flown de Havilland aircraft. Michael's flying career started on DH Tiger Moths with Manchester University Air Squadron in November 1949, going solo for the first time in March 1950. These reserve squadrons were re-equipped the following year with DH Chipmunks, which had an enclosed cockpit, wheel brakes, flaps and, best of all, a 12-channel VHF radio.

National Service came next, including a conversion course on DH Vampires at Merryfield and an operational flying course at Chivenor, the latter to learn how to use the Vampire's four forward-firing 20mm canon. Michael's second year was spent on a fully operational front-line squadron in Germany flying the faithful Vampire and then the much more powerful DH Venom. Michael was sent to Hatfield along with three other pilots on a course to learn the mechanical difference between the two, staying at the Salisbury Arms hotel. This was in the Spring of 1954.

Michael was de-mobbed after two years in the RAF but continued to fly with an Auxiliary Squadron. He joined the City of Manchester squadron, where he continued to fly DH Vampires, until moving to London in 1956. Michael's last solo flight was in a Cessna 150 at the Luton Flying Club.

He also has memories as a passenger in other DH aircraft such as the Comet, Dove and Trident. Here are photos of Michael, aged 23. If you would like to get in touch, please email contact@hatfieldhistory.uk.



HLHS Website

Don't forget to keep an eye on the society's website at www.hatfieldhistory.uk. Derek Martindale has been adding more information about Hatfield men who served in WW1, particularly those who survived the terrible slaughter. Further detail will hopefully be added over the next few months.

If you are engaged in local-history research, see also the Newsletters page, which contains links to the society's newsletters going back to the first-ever issue in 1990. Hazel Bell updates the index quarterly after each newsletter comes out – an invaluable finding aid.

See also the Publications page. The latest addition is a reprint of Terry Pankhurst's book *When the Bombs Dropped*, a fascinating account and analysis of the bombing of de Havilland in 1940.

Please email contact@hatfieldhistory.uk if you know of any forthcoming event we might publicise on the Events page – see www.hatfieldhistory.uk/home/events/.