

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 116 March 2020

THE RYDE'S EMINENT ARCHITECT

By Bill Derbyshire

In 1960, my Father – Andrew Derbyshire – brought us down from Leeds to Hertfordshire to accomplish two things. The creation of the perfect university at York and to design and build the perfect home for his family. In both he succeeded brilliantly.

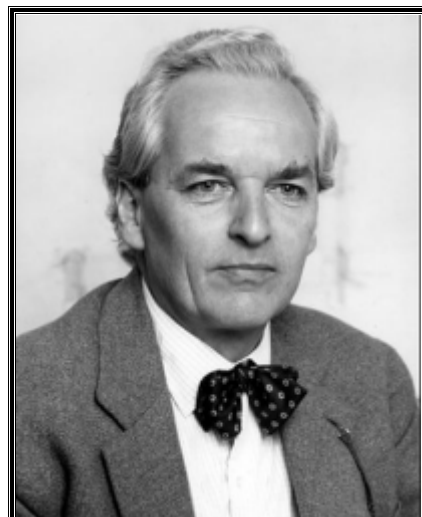
Learning that plots of land had been made available by Hatfield Development Corporation on the Ryde estate, Hatfield – Andrew secured a plot of land hidden away at the end of Sunnyfield – a cul-de-sac. The price was £1,000.

The house was first conceived as a sketch plan during a family holiday in the New Forest in August 1963 just as the Great Train Robbery was taking place. We had been living in a rented flat at Brocket Hall where the dining table was often submerged by the development plans for York University, but after that 1963 holiday the house plans would be brought down every weekend. Eventually a building contractor, Shadbolt and Nash, was engaged. A helpful neighbour, Mr Squires – then owner of No. 5 Sunnyfield and manager of Welwyn Builders – facilitated some of the more unusual requests submitted by my mother, Lily, such as the double sink (imported from Sweden).

Another of Lily's requests was for pink bricks. There was a contretemps with the planning officer over this who objected to the colour. Andrew pointed out that there was a national shortage of bricks at the time so eventually got we got our way by specifying pink engineering bricks. Good call.

The house was duly completed in 1965 and we moved in that autumn. It has many innovative features such as inside/outside access hatchways for dustbins and deliveries and a kitchen-dining separator unit with draws and cupboards opening from both sides. Go right at the top of the stairs and you are in the parent area with master bedroom and bathroom. Go left through a doorway at the top of the stairs and you are in a self-contained children's area with three bedrooms, a bathroom and shared sitting room.

Another door through the sitting room leads on to the roof terrace. Last, but not least, the garden. Known for its large large trees on the perimeter. Local children thought their was a secret wood and 'could we play in your wood, missus?'. *Continued...*



Sir Andrew Derbyshire

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Chairman: **Phil Marris**



Sir Andrew passed away in 2016 and my mother in January of this year. Now my brother, sister and myself are selling the house and we are almost completed. I wish the new owners every happiness in the house going forward.

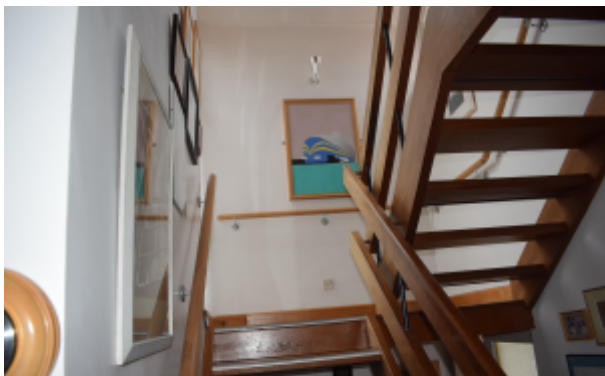
My father was knighted for his services to architecture in 1986.



ABOVE: No.4 Sunnyfields as at October 2019.



The kitchen still retained many original features.



ABOVE: Very early 1960s open plan stairs.



Lounge through to dining area, with parquet flooring and wooden slatted ceiling.

AND CONTINUING WITH LOCAL ARCHITECTURE



Not the swimming pool



The Hatfield Swimming pool

The two pictures above show British buildings with ‘hyperbolic paraboloid’ roofs. The similarities are remarkable. The first image is of the Geoffrey Chaucer school, Southwark, which opened in 1958 and was designed by architects Chamberlin, Powell & Bon and “...was one of the more celebrated architectural projects of that year” and “reflected the educational zeitgeist of the time where new London schools were to have individual character”. It was given Grade 2 listed status in 1993. The Hatfield swimming pool was designed by WW Chapman & HG Coulter and opened in 1966.

REPLY TO 'TINGEY's' DEMOLITION ARTICLE

By Brian Lawrence

The front page of the latest newsletter (December 2019) presented a sad picture of one of the town's landmark buildings, Tingey's Corner House, reduced to a heap of rubble in preparation for its new role as a temporary car park during the next phase of the Town Centre Redevelopment project.

This distinctive store, built a hundred years ago by Edmund Thomas Tingey, was the anchor for what soon became the development of Newtown as Hatfield's main shopping centre with an increasing number of new local tradesmen setting up their businesses there rather than in the old town where space for expansion was very restricted. The Tingey family played a major role in this development and their fascinating story is told by Janet Robinson (nee Tingey) in her two publications, "The Tingeys of Hatfield" and "Family Matters".

It had been John Tingey and his family who settled in Hatfield in the 1820s and moved to Newtown some 30 years later as increased development took place a mile or so to the west of the newly opened railway line. A significant step was taken when John's youngest son, Jonathan Edmund took over a small grocery business, one of several small businesses which had sprung up to serve the growing population in that part of the town.

Undoubtedly, they were an enterprising and hard-working family and it seems only natural that Jonathan Edmund's two sons joined their father to build a thriving enterprise by the end of the nineteenth century. Soon after the end of World War 1 the two boys, Edmund Thomas, known as Tom, and his brother John were holding the reins and it was decided that the Tingey firm should be split with Tom taking over the furniture business while younger brother, John, would run grocery shop. It is clear that Tom had developed a natural entrepreneurial streak and he soon took the ambitious step of building a new store at the junction of the St Albans Road and French Horn Lane. A well-established local architect, Percival Blow, based in St Albans, was commissioned to design the store which opened its doors on 20 September, 1920.

It was described as an "interesting building with typical Blow style pitched roof with gables," making the most of the corner site by "placing the arched showroom entrance at the apex, topped with a dome". The construction of the new store was undertaken by a well-known local small builder, John Naden, and the new building certainly made an impact on the locals, many of whom soon began to refer to it as the Taj Mahal. It served to transform Newtown which was beginning a period of rapid growth as a result of the considerable post-war housing development on the surrounding open land. Within a decade Tom had commissioned Percival Blow to design another corner retail store to accommodate his glass, china and ironmongery business on the opposite side of the road, along with four other shops.

Meanwhile, younger brother, John, had enjoyed success by expanding the grocery business which by now had outgrown the original premises on the opposite side of the St Albans Road. The answer was for John to have built a modern grocery store immediately across the road into which J Tingey and Sons Ltd. proudly moved in 1928.



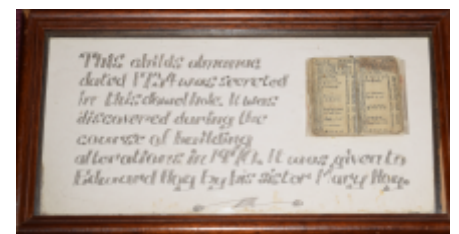
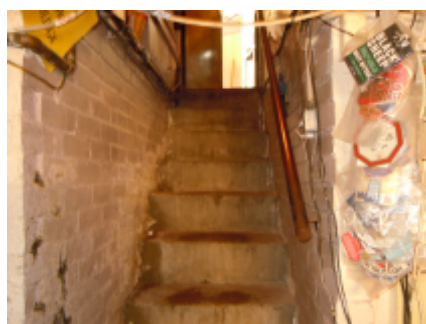
Edmund Tingey (in dark top) with staff outside the shop at 80 St. Albans Road c1910.
Courtesy Rosemary Marshall

With both branches of the Tingey family operating their thriving businesses from smart modern stores just a few hundred yards apart it provided the impetus for more shops to be built, filling the gap between the two Tingey stores along the St Albans Road, and ensuring that Newtown well equipped with the range of facilities to become the town's main shopping area. The Tingey businesses served the residents of Hatfield well throughout the austere days of World War II, providing the restricted rations and utility goods that were available and then to prosper during the recovery, as Hatfield was designated one of the post war New Towns. Inevitably the passage of time brought further changes, particularly the pedestrianising of that stretch of the St Albans Road, and by the end of the 1960s both E T Tingey & Sons and J Tingey & Sons had ceased trading in Hatfield. The grocery store was soon demolished and replaced by Tescos whilst the former furniture store took on numerous different roles but failed to recapture its former glory, as it stood in isolation at the end of the shopping area.

Sadly, all traces of the influence of the Tingey family on the development of Newtown have now disappeared in the interests of "progress" but at least one building designed by this the successful local architect, Percival Blow, remains in Hatfield as a reminder of this period of expansion in the inter-war years. That building is the former offices of the Hatfield Rural District Council in St Albans Road which has in recent times been converted into residential accommodation. The building, described as being in the "Georgian style and carried out in red brick with rubbed brick and stone facings" was opened by the Marquess of Salisbury in March 1930. Tom Tingey was a prominent local councillor for a number of years and actually was chairman of the Rural District Council in 1931. It seems quite likely, therefore, that the successful designs produced by Blow for some of the "Tingey buildings" that were by then a feature of the modern development a few hundred yards further along the St Albans Road were a major factor in deciding that he should be chosen as the architect for this new permanent home for the council. Many significant buildings designed by Percival Blow still live on, notably in St Albans but also in other towns in Herts and Beds and some much further afield. They include residential, commercial and municipal buildings and illustrate many distinctive "Blow features" and at least five buildings designed by him have been awarded Grade II listed status. A comprehensive, well-illustrated book entitled "St Albans Architect Percival Blow" was published by the St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society in 2019.

DOWN THE CELLAR OF THE EIGHT BELLS

In November 2019, Andy Parish gave us a guided tour on the day he left the Eight Bells after serving seven years as landlord. The first photo shows a bricked up passage, believed to run under Park Street to the former Checkers pub just across the road which, in turn, backed onto the Pryor Reid brewery which owned both pubs. The tiny 1734 almanac found at the Eight Bells fifty years ago (see issue 108) has now been donated to the Mill Green Museum.



Dates for your Diary

Mon. 9 March (2.15 p.m. for 2.30 p.m.) – talk by Eric McLaughlin (Hatfield House volunteer)
– “History of Hatfield House and The Old Palace”

Mon. 8 June (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)

Thu. 18 June – visit by coach to de Havilland Aircraft Museum, Salisbury Hall, London Colney. Look out for details in our June newsletter. Their website is at www.dehavillandmuseum.co.uk.

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

Mon. 14 Sept. (7.15 p.m. for 7.30 p.m.) – talk by Alastair Cameron:
– “The varying fortunes of the Hatfield & St Albans Railway”

Mon. 14 Dec. (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.

Reminder: Wellfield Close has 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.

This year marks the Society’s 30th Anniversary

According to the June 1990 newsletter (Issue No. 1), the first meeting of the Society took place on Thursday 24th May 1990 at Mill Green Museum, with attendance outstripping the available number of chairs. The society’s original name was “Hatfield This Century”, which had the aim of continuing the work of the W.E.A., which had culminated in the publication of the *Hatfield and its People* series of booklets in the 1960s. More about this noteworthy milestone in our June newsletter.

“It’s Life, Jim, but not as we know it!”

Here is a slightly different kind of Hatfield local history. Ian Bell, son of Hazel (who indexes our newsletters) was raised in Hatfield where Hazel still lives today. In the 1980s, while up at Cambridge, Ian co-developed a technically advanced computer game called “Elite” – a space-trading game, which your present chairman remembers fondly as being both brilliant and addictive although, of course, it was never played at work (Ahem!). “Elite” was a best-seller and has just been celebrated by the Royal Mail in a set of commemorative stamps (top-left stamp below). Astonishingly for its time, “Elite” crammed in the ability for the player to explore eight different galaxies, each with 256 planets. It managed all this using an 8-bit computer processor whereas, today, we luxuriate with 64-bits.



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



No 94 (1968)



No 95 (1968)



No 96 (1968)

Members will recall the unidentified Hatfield photos in the December 2019 newsletter. Brian Tott and Robin Harcourt Williams both identified Nos. 94-96 as rear-views of North Place in the Great North Road just up the road from the station. No. 96 also includes the rear of the Red Lion.

Brian Lawrence came up trumps with Photo No. 92 and commented as follows:



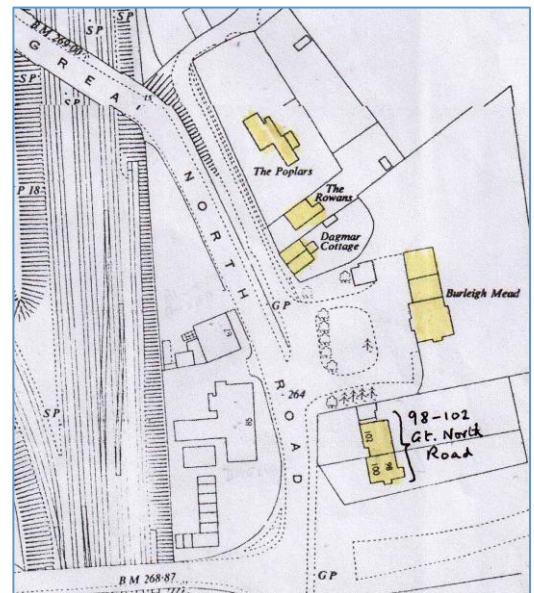
No 92 (1968)

“No. 92 shows a pair of cottages which stood immediately north of Burleigh Mead (the former home of Dr Lovell Drage). They were built alongside the narrow stretch of road which led down to Sherriff’s Mill running parallel with the now blocked stretch of the Great North Road, opposite Alexandra House (the former girls’ School). To the north of the cottages, set back, was a detached bungalow and beyond that a substantial detached house called The Poplars – demolished c.1960 and replaced with the row of town houses which can be seen on the left-hand side of the photo ...

“... For the best part of the first 30 years of my life, I walked past them

virtually every day, firstly on my way to school and then on my way to work. I am inclined to think that the cottages predated Burleigh Mead, the re-alignment of the Great North Road and the building of the Wrestlers’ Bridge in 1850. Could it be that the cottages and their occupants were near neighbours of the Steamer public house which once stood on the site of The Poplars?”

To add to Brian’s comments, these two dwellings went by the name of Dagmar Cottages. The 1901 Census records them as, “used as boy’s hospital for school” (i.e. Dagmar House boys’ school, next to Alexandra House). The cottages survived until the 1960s when they were demolished as part of the Burleigh Mead redevelopment. Photo No. 92 shows one of the newly built Bull Stag Green town houses peeping out from behind.



1960 OS map showing Bull Stag Green

HLHS Website

Please email contact@hatfieldhistory.uk if you have any ideas for our website, which can be found at www.hatfieldhistory.uk.