

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 123 December 2021

THE OLD FIDDLE (And quest for an old orchard)

It is often the case that when on a specific research, something else emerges which sets one off on another avenue of historical interest, writes Jon Brindle. On this occasion we were trying to assist local environmentalist Peter Oakenfull on his quest to locate any evidence of ancient orchards in the Hatfield area.

This was part of a University of East Anglia project called Orchards East, and if a site could be identified as having been noted in the OS map of 1890, a surveyor would visit and record what trees had survived and the various species of, for example, apple, pear, cherry, plum and walnut etc.

Apparently, an 'orchard' has no defined number of trees; even three or four would count! Having grown up in Hatfield - and being a prime candidate for a Boy Scout Activity Badge for scrumping (if they had such a thing) - I thought I could help find some sites. However, Peter seemed to know of all the ones I could recall. So, with a fresh determination, I consulted some auction sale documents of pubs owned by the Hatfield breweries of Simpsons (1836) and Pryor Reid (1920) as among typical details of a pub's premises such as rooms; outbuildings; beer sales; rents and leases, were also listed details of their grounds. And it was the Old Fiddle in Roe Green which came up trumps!

The pub was first mentioned in 1786, and whilst it may have been rebuilt about 40 years later, the 1836 sale information stated it had four rooms, plus a kitchen, wood yard and a bake house. There were also two fields, each of around one and a half acres: one in arable use and the other a meadow which included an *orchard*!

It was now 'game-on'. Although the pub was closed in 1956 to become a family home, a visit to it was hastily undertaken.

By a cruel twist of fate, the 1928 road construction of the Barnet Bypass, and the A1M expansion in the 1970s, had conspired to reduce the property's plot to a small garden with some newhousing to the rear which bordered a high embankment of the motorway. But no orchard!

However, a conversation with the residents, Mr & Mrs Farley, led to more aspects of their home's long history and to further correspondence, as received overleaf. *Continued....*



The Old Fiddle pub pre 1956 in Roe Green.
In 1920 its average beer sales were above 100 pints per day - or 34 customers drinking 3 pints each!

Contact the Editors:

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

Email: contact@hatfieldhistory.uk

Chairman: **Phil Marris**



By Henry Farley:

Thank you for your message with the interesting sale documents attached.

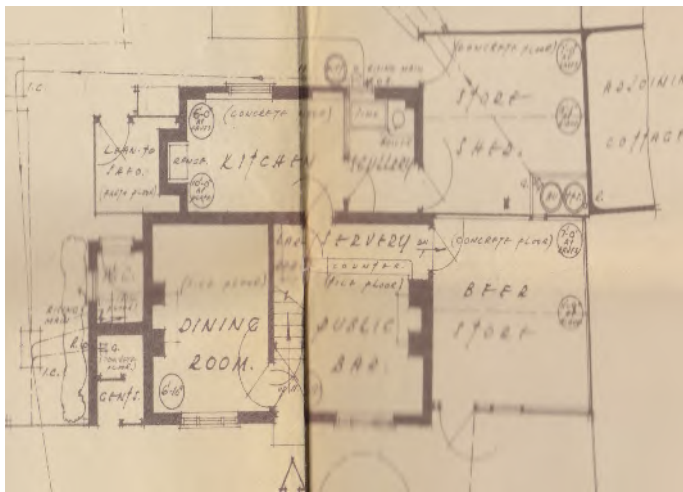
Our knowledge of the history of the Old Fiddle is based on the little booklet about Hatfield and its Pubs, plus a couple of pages from an unknown (to us) document given by an acquaintance years ago.

Interestingly, the 1836 sale description fits in with what was here before much more recent modifications but does not mention a cellar, although the 1920 sale *does* mention one, of which there is no evidence now. Perhaps a 'cellar' doesn't have to be underground!

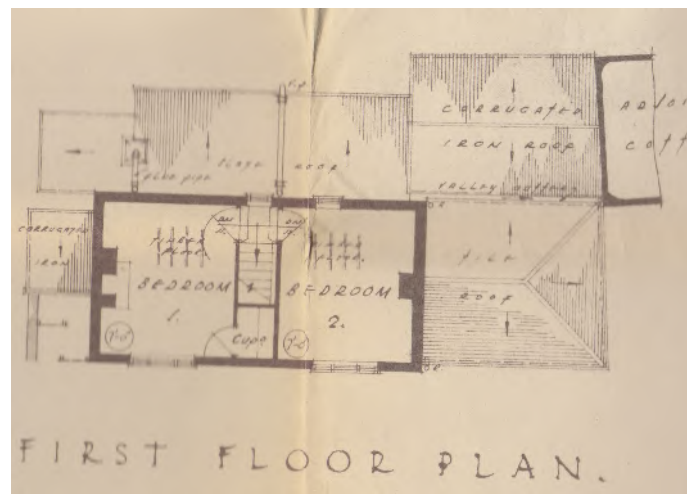
When, in 1972, I bought the property from Sid Hollier - who had done extensive alterations - including the flat roof extension to the north - he said there was no evidence of a cellar.

To the left of the photo of the pub, is a small lean-to structure which is what I have always believed to have been an outside urinal, and the drain from it is still there and feeds into the sewer manhole close by.

There was, however, a single storey beer store where the flat roofed extension is now, and you can see evidence of its ridged roof on the wall above the extension.



1947 floor plans: Ground floor, above.



First floor with two bedrooms

From these plans, it is clear the beer store was to the north of the property near to a neighbouring cottage. The construction of the roof is interesting, and suggests that it was first built at ground level and then raised.

The 'A' frames running at right angles to the ridge have sockets to take rafters at ceiling level running parallel to the ridge. Each socket and its matching rafter have Roman numerals carved into them, presumably to ensure they go in the correct place. Everything is rough hewn rather than sawn. This may suggest to someone when it was likely to have been made. Your comment regarding it being possibly re-built in the 1820s, could explain the disparity between the Hatfield WEA pub booklet and the bills of sale. That sort of possibility had not occurred to me, so I had assumed the building dated back to the 1700s.

From conveyancing documents I found that:-

In 1957 Bertie Potterill bought the property from the Benskins brewery and obtained planning permission to change the use of it from a pub to a private dwelling.

My memory says that Bertie had been a publican at one of the other pubs that had been shut in the town (*possibly the Prince of Wales in Wellfield Road which closed in 1956 - Ed*).

In 1965 Sid Hollier and his wife Christine bought the property from Bertie and had architect's plans drawn in 1966 for a conversion to more or less what it is now.

I bought the property in 1972.

Somewhere along the line the Old Fiddle became Rose Cottage, but today that is only used by the water company and it is now simply 11 College Lane (*formerly Roe Green Lane - Ed*)

HATFIELD UNITED “TOWN” FOOTBALL CLUB

By Brian Lawrence

The article on page 4 of the Newsletter, dated September 2021, brought back many happy memories of my introduction to Hatfield’s football club.

My first visit to the Stonecross Road ground must have been at the beginning of the 1948-9 season, almost certainly the time when the name of the Club was changed from “United” to “Town”, and I remained a loyal supporter of the Club for many years thereafter. Hatfield Town had a very successful season in 1948-9 and ended the season in 2nd place in the Eastern Section of the Spartan league, thus continuing the trend that had begun just before the outbreak of the War. Whilst I had still not reached my teenage years I am surprised to see that I was keen enough to write to the Secretary of the football club at the end of the season to express my loyalty to the Club and he kindly responded by sending me a photograph of the team.

Over the next few years Hatfield Town had mixed fortunes in the league but it was a time of considerable change and I recall going there at the beginning of one season, (possibly 1950) to find that vast amounts of top soil had been deposited at the western end of the ground to form banking behind one of the goals where spectators could stand and watch from a raised position. Were they really expecting the crowds to swell to that extent? It also provided the spectators at that end of the ground the opportunity to turn round and keep an eye on the St Audrey’s Old Boys matches as they played on a pitch at 90 degrees to the Hatfield ground, close to the Stonecross Road houses.

Another innovation in 1950 was the inauguration of the Dalton Shield Trophy, played annually between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. It was given the name Dalton after Charles Dalton, managing Editor of the Welwyn Times and I wonder if its origin was due to the fact that the two towns had been designated as sites for the first wave of the Government’s project to create Post War “New Towns”. The guest of honour at the first Dalton Shield match was Tom Whittaker, the Arsenal Manager, who presented the trophy to the triumphant Hatfield Town captain.

The Hatfield United club of the previous season re-named themselves as Hatfield Town, below, for the 1948-49 term. Photo taken at the former Stonecross Road ground



Among the Arsenal contingent present at the match was Jack Crayston, a member of the Arsenal backroom staff and a former England International. Long standing followers would have been aware that pre-war Hatfield teams had featured, almost entirely, players who were well-known local men and had close connections with the town. This was another change in 1950 when four Scots players joined the club and became an integral part of the team for several seasons. I well recall the Hatfield team running out from their changing room behind the wooden grandstand to what one might describe as the polite applause of the supporters rather than the roar of the crowd, accompanied by a stirring tune played over the P.A. System, as my cousin, Les Valentine, announced them as the Blue Devils. Results fluctuated, but

in 1952-3 Hatfield finished second in the league and were promoted to the Spartan League Premier Division. As so often happens with promoted teams, life became tough in the higher division, they won only 6 matches in the following season, finished bottom of the league and were relegated. Perhaps it is not surprising that my interest waned at that stage and my records of Hatfield Town's fortunes then went blank.

In the mid 1960s, though I don't recall the details, a project was launched to revitalise Hatfield Town FC and with my youthful memories still on my mind, I subscribed to a share issue by investing £10 for 40 shares in Hatfield Town Football Club Limited.

I still await a dividend!

It is a great regret to me that with the demand for more housing Hatfield Town lost their ground, and despite empty promises the Town's team has been without a permanent home for several decades now and has had to find temporary homes either on the fringes of Hatfield or in other neighbouring towns.

As I reflect on these memories over 70 years I find it interesting to quote the following extract from the Outline Report produced by the Hatfield Development Corporation back in 1949:-

"The existing Stonecross Road ground is ideal in size and shape for a full-sized athletic stadium. The earth bank which has been deposited across it should be removed to the circumference where banked standing should be formed."

Brian G Lawrence Sept. 2021

Jon Brindle responds:

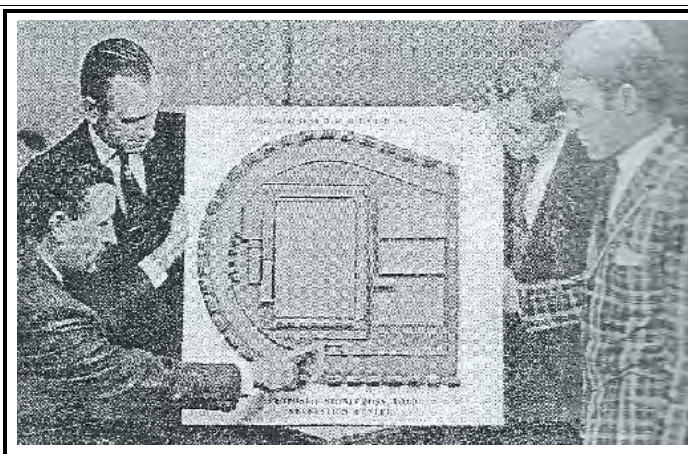
Brian would recall the mid 1960s days when Hatfield played the 'A' sides of Arsenal, Spurs and West Ham in the Metropolitan League for a few seasons and in front of sizeable crowds. They were semi-pro back then, with players earning from £2 per game. The 1969 photo at the bottom right demonstrates the club's ambitions for a modern ground. But sadly it wasn't to be. The club moved to Angerland Common in 1980, but folded just four years later.



Brian's original share capital certificate dated June 1967



**1966: Young fans at Stonecross Road
HLHS member Jon Brindle holds the banner**



1969: Club officials display their plans for a major upgrade to the Stonecross Road ground

Dredging Of The Broadwater

About 30 years ago, the beautiful Broadwater in Hatfield Park was drained and the River Lea supplying it was diverted around the back from the Mill Green bridge to near the sawmill. The reason for this was to remove the build-up of silt.

It was a sad sight to see the Broadwater's dried-up bed, which revealed a surprising shallowness. It was, perhaps, only 6 feet at its deepest point. Hence, one supposes, for the silt to be removed. Some gravel extraction also took place, and a great mound of it was temporarily created nearby. When the work was completed, the Lea was again re-diverted to replenish the Broadwater.

But this was not the first time it had been dredged.

Michael Hall wrote about a previous occasion and supplied the photos of it, below:

The Broadwater Hatfield Park 1935 to 1938 as you have never seen it

My father Guy Hall (driving the dragline pictured) spent 3 years dredging the Broadwater during the Stewardship of the 4th Marquess. It seems a dam was built near the Vineyard diverting the river down the backwater on the north bank to the Mill pool at the Saw Mills. One day the dam broke and he was stranded mid-stream and a colleague rowed out to assist him (pictured). My Dad's "Banksman" drove a dumper truck to dispose of the silt. He did tell me his name and said "he was very good at his job" but I'm afraid time and age has erased it from memory. Perhaps someone out there knows who it was?

At the end of the job my father was presented with a commemorative gold watch with his name and "The Broadwater 1935 to 1938" engraved on it.



Dredging commences on the Broadwater



It is now drained of water



The dragline beside the red bridge



The dam breaks and strands the dragline

Growing up in Hatfield 1946 -1960 By Ron Woodley

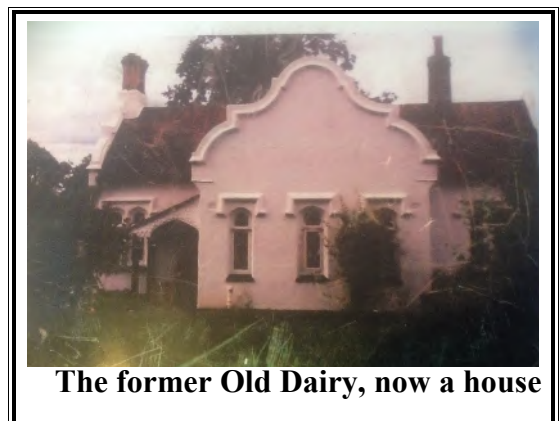
I moved to the Hatfield area, aged 8, with my Mum, Dad and sisters Sylvia and Janet in about 1946. We spent the war years at a farm called Sayes Park. It was just outside a village called High Wych near Sawbridgeworth. My Dad was a second cowman; in those days you had to wait for a person to die before you went up the ladder. Dad got a head cowman job at Hillend Farm near the sawmill works and we lived in one of three farm cottages by a gate-house to Hatfield Park. It was a good place to live. The three families were us Woodleys, Oakleys and Robinsons. We got to school by Brunt's coaches. He would pick up kids in Essendon then us. The young ones went to Countess Annes at the top of Church Street the older ones went to St Audreys (*in School Lane*). The winter of 1947 was one of the worst as coaches couldn't get through the snow. We had 3 weeks off school. It was great for sledging. Dad's time working for Mr Tarry at Hillend Farm never went unnoticed by Lord Cranbourne of Hatfield House who used to take Dad to work elsewhere in the Park at Home Farm. Eventually, Lord Cranbourne had an old dairy there converted to a house for us Woodleys. At Home Farm there were 2 herds of cattle: Jersey cows supplied Hatfield House with fresh milk and cream and the Ayrshires were milked by a mobile milking bail which was taken from field to field wherever the cows were grazing. On the South, private, side of Hatfield House there was a water purifying plant for the big house called Carter's Pond. It also substituted as a swimming pool for the old Lord Salisbury and his family. It had two log cabin changing rooms; male and female. At the deep end there was a diving board covered with coconut matting. The water was a bit murky and was a bit deep for me but at the other end it sloped to nothing. From the pool to the house there was a tarmacked path which was laid for the old Lord Salisbury (*Prime Minister*) to ride his tricycle.

During the school holidays I used to walk behind the binders (an early combine) and pick up the sheaves of corn and stack them into 'stooks' so that the wind would blow through and dry them. A week or so later they would be collected and piled into big stacks. In winter, these stacks would be thrashed for corn. I was paid for my part-time work on the farm but cannot remember how much.

Before leaving school in 1953, I heard that if you wanted to join builder Donald Cordner's gang, a forfeit in their initiation ceremony was you had to lie between the rails on the branch line track and let a train go over you.

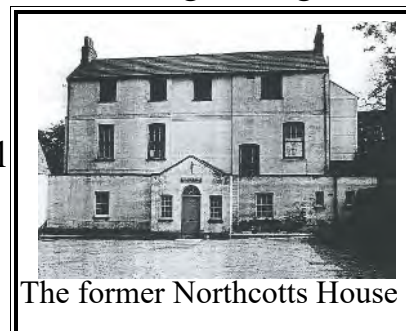
I wasn't daft enough to join! Instead I became an electrician's mate at May and Robertson Ltd. They did not have apprenticeships because the work was so up and down at the time.

I went in the army from 1957 to 1959 to do my National Service and was thankful I wasn't in an apprenticeship as I would have been 21 years old before going into the army. I returned to my job at May and Robertson after completing my service. I met my wife Margaret in 1953, we went to Saint Audreys School together when the New Town was starting to be built. I was a member of the youth club in the Old Town in a big house called Northcotts. This



was where the Hatfield Social Club is now. I remember there being table tennis tables and a boxing ring where, incidentally, I was knocked out twice by the same boy, Mick Parrott. A chap called Lenny used to run it. I'd go once or twice a week. I didn't go to the Breaks much, but I stayed friends with its warden Skip Salmon and Lenny too. Skip loaned me all the cutlery and china for my wedding reception which we had at the Cavendish pub.

I remember the roller-skating rink by the New Fiddle as it was then. It was a good night out, but the noise was horrendous and I think we wore out the floorboards – no wonder it closed! Boxing was my main sport, but a few of us created a bicycle circuit on derelict land behind what was Glebe Land cottages off French Horn Lane. We cut down all the nettles and brambles and somebody's dad brought us a lorry load of cinders for the track, which went down to the Stream Woods swallow holes by the railway line. We then converted old bikes to ride around on. Quite a few of us used to make our own pastimes and didn't go to the youth clubs much until after we did our National Service.



The former Northcotts House

Some Memories of Hatfield Archaeological Society By Stewart Bullen

I joined Hatfield & District Archaeological Society (HADAS) at its inception in 1967. At the time I was 15 and at Burleigh School and fascinated by science. I turned up on the first morning of the start of the Batterdale dig and presented myself to the first adult who looked like they knew what was happening. From that moment I was hooked. Sundays were dig days, but when we had a permanent base, we attended off-site activities on other evenings. Archaeological digs have changed very little and those familiar with 'Time Team' will know how it works. A lot of hard digging to get down to the archaeology, occasionally assisted by a 'Drot', (affectionate name for an earth moving machine the origins of which I have no idea), but usually with a spade or a 'trenching tool'. Then the fun begins, down on ones knees with a trowel and a paintbrush for hours on end, occasionally standing up to stretch or to call someone over to see a 'find'. The sun was always shining, I think.....

The dig in Batterdale was a lucky spinoff from the late 60s and early 70s redevelopment of the Old Town. Demolition had occurred and the rubble had been cleared. We had a few precious months to explore before the rebuild began and the archaeology was covered again by the new development. The Batterdale trenches were on the site of a supposed medieval pond and so it was expected that a real cross section of life would come to light. And it did!

One of the most tantalising finds, which to my knowledge was never fully explained, was an arrangement of ox horns interlaced with each other in a line. These were incorrectly described as 'animal bones'. Their source was certainly a local slaughter house, but the nearest we came to finding a function for them was that the bones acted as some form of drainage. Courses of Tudor brickwork and other structural features turned up together with some early medieval pottery and glassware. Several well preserved examples of shoe leather were also found. Above these layers an almost perfect 17th century Metropolitan Slipware plate emerged.

I was digging in a part of a trench at a similar level to that which produced the slipware dish and began to uncover pottery. The pieces were quite large so I called over to Malcolm Fletcher, the dig Director, to have a look. For reasons I initially didn't get, he got quite excited.



Prize find:
A Bellarmine flagon

It was salt glazed stoneware, I knew that much, but he started talking about Bellarmine and hoping it had a ‘mask’ on it. I continued to dig and there was indeed a mask on the neck of what turned out to be an almost complete Bellarmine flagon! I later learned it was fun poked at the Italian Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (*later becoming a Saint*) who was very anti-drink. He died in 1621. An interesting note, in our dig at Batterdale was we never found a single coin! What we *did* find in profusion were clay tobacco pipes, so much so that I personally believed the people of Hatfield used them as a form of barter! It seems that during the 17th to 19th centuries, pipe bowl sizes accurately reflected the prevailing economic climate; small when times were hard, larger during wealthier times. This makes dating them relatively easy.

We were lucky to find a wide variety. During later periods, some pubs used pipes as advertising by putting the pub’s emblem on them, possibly connecting pipes to pubs! Much of the material found in Batterdale is in the Mill Green Museum; certainly the Bellarmine flagon, the slipware dish and some of the clay pipes.

**The flagon is about 17 inches tall and held over a gallon.*



St. Bellarmine’s mask embossed on the neck of the flagon.

The Clay Tobacco Pipes At Mill Green by Jon Brindle

Further to Stewart’s recollections, we visited the museum and sifted through their collection of pipes. Some were plain, but most had their bowls embossed decoratively. The nearest we could find relating to possible pub names were two pipes depicting cross keys and one with a bull’s horns. The Hatfield Brewery owned a few pubs with the word Bull or Horns but only two in Hatfield; The Bulls Head (1767), and the Bull at Stanborough (1822). There was also a pub in Brickendon called The Horns, but no reference to a Cross Keys. When tobacco arrived in Britain in the late 1500s, manufacturing began of the clay pipes to smoke it. These pipes were used from back then until the early 1900s when cigarettes became more popular. But that 300 year period of clay pipe usage neatly coincides with the arrival of beer brewing in Hatfield with the Searanke’s, until the end of brewing here in 1920 by Pryor Reid & Co. However, for most of their existence, the manufacturing of clay pipes was more of a family run cottage industry than by big production in a factory. The nearest few pipe makers were in Hertford and St. Albans, who used their own moulds. From 1837 to 1920 Pryor Reid’s brewery had at one time or another 170 pubs. It seems unlikely that so many different pub names would have been depicted on clay pipes, and some would have surely shown up by now if they had. But the great amount and variety of those unearthed in the Old Town is perhaps more likely to do with Hatfield being a busy staging post, replete with pubs and hotels for countless travellers stopping over on their first - or last - leg of the day’s journey to or from London. Accordingly, most travellers would have brought their brittle clay pipes from whence they came, and tossed away broken ones.

All photos with kind permission of Mill Green Museum.



All images are of pipes at Mill Green Museum



Pipe replica of the 1821 Dick Whittington Stone, Highgate



A Victorian soldier’s head as a pipe bowl



This bowl is clasped by a bird’s claw

Message from the Chairman



As 2021 draws to a close, may I wish you all, on behalf of the committee, a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. After eighteen months of Covid-19 restrictions, it was something of a relief to resume our get-togethers.



The September meeting was well-attended and members seemed to approve of the first-class facilities offered by our new venue at Hatfield Social Club. The meeting was partly social but we were also treated to an excellent talk given by Alastair Cameron, on the subject of the long-defunct Hatfield & St Albans Railway.

Diary Dates:

Subject to further Covid-19 restrictions, the following meetings have been booked with Hatfield Social Club (76 Great North Rd, Hatfield AL9 5ER):

- Monday, 13 December 2021 (2–4 p.m.): This will be a social meeting so please, as usual, bring along your various artefacts for others to look at.
- Monday, 14 March 2022 (2–4 p.m.) – Talk (topic tbd)
- Monday, 13 June 2022 (7–9 p.m.) – Talk (topic tbd) + AGM
- Monday, 11 July 2022 (2–4 p.m.) – Summer social meeting
- Monday, 12 September 2022 (7–9 p.m.) – Talk (topic tbd)
- Monday, 12 December 2022 (2–4 p.m.) – Christmas social meeting

The Quarterly Newsletter:

After twelve years, and as previously reported, Jon Brindle and Sheila Whittingham are standing down as editors of the quarterly newsletter. On behalf of everyone, may I express appreciation for their high-quality work over such a long period. This is their final newsletter which, along with my two-sided “Insert”, is a particularly “bumper” edition, which I hope members will enjoy.

Following the call for a new editor in the September newsletter, I am delighted to announce that Hazel Bell has volunteered to take over the reins. Hazel is a retired (and prize-winning) professional indexer who has also been published in her own right. For our Society, Hazel has already indexed seventeen of our books (including a cumulative index for the *Hatfield and its People* series). Hazel also maintains a cumulative index of our quarterly newsletters going back to Issue 1 (June 1990). I feel we will be in safe hands.

Call for volunteers: We have just six committee members trying to fulfil eight roles, and with no cover for any of them. Should an existing committee member retire, it may be difficult to keep the Society going. If you would like to join the committee, if only as a spare pair of hands, please send email to contact@hatfieldhistory.uk or phone me on 01707 892597.

Phil Marris (Chairman)



Heather Richardson (1 Oct. 1938 – 25 Aug. 2021)

Another of our long-standing society members is sadly no longer with us. Heather was with her family on holiday when she fell ill and was rushed into hospital where she passed away. It may surprise you to know that Heather was born in Bogota, Colombia and came to the UK in 1948 with her parents and two younger brothers. In 1966 she married Maurice and they moved to Hatfield in 1967 where they bought up their sons Nigel and Tristan.



Heather and Maurice were active in the community, being members of the Hatfield Liberal Democratic party as well as members of HLHS. For fourteen years, Heather was a valued member of our committee and, for most of that time, acted as our hardworking Treasurer. She was always willing to help with all our activities and will be greatly missed.

Chris Martindale (Secretary)



The September 2021 newsletter featured some postcards donated by Malcolm Harvey, whose late mother Eileen Smith was brought up in Hatfield in the 1900s. This one (see right) dates from WW1 when Flt. Lt. W.L. Robinson brought down a German airship at Cuffley on Sept. 3rd, 1916.

To save your chairman having to research the event, the *Welwyn Hatfield Times* helpfully wrote about it in its edition of August 25th, 2021.

The Schutte-Lanz airship SL-11, somewhat lighter than a Zeppelin, was returning from a bombing mission over the Capital when it was attacked by William Leefe Robinson of the No. 39 Home Defence Squadron over Cuffley.

This was apparently the first airship to be shot down over British soil. Robinson's biplane was armed with high-explosive incendiary ammunition, which set the airship on fire before it crashed behind the "Plough Inn", killing the entire 15-man crew.

Robinson was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions and a memorial was erected on the site.

Phil Marris

