



S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

First Public Meeting

Issue 1

Editor—Terry Collins

June 2012

On Friday May 4th S.A.L.H.S held their first public meeting and AGM in Stanstead Abbotts parish hall. From an initial meeting which had attracted just 12 people to a second gathering which had swollen to 27, to this meeting which brought together 47 people, of whom the majority joined as members during the course of the evening.

The evening began with a brief introduction from acting Chair Ian White, who outlined the aims of the society, which are to foster interest in the history of Stanstead Ab-

botts and the neighbouring parish of St Margarets, by holding regular meetings for members, with invited speakers focusing on the history of the local area. Carrying out research and preserving artifacts relating to local history. It was also hoped that in the future it may be possible to find space within the village to open a small museum holding items of local interest and the photographic archives already held.

Following Ian's opening remarks there followed a talk by local life time resident Richard Atkins speaking on The River Lea and

its importance to the village and surrounding area. There followed a short social gathering when new members enrolled while others chatted about possible future events and looked at the archive photographs displayed around the walls. After enjoying a glass or two of wine and some nibbles the serious business of the society's first AGM got underway.

The committee was duly elected, details overleaf, the chairman thanked all those present and looked forward to the next meeting or event, see page 2.

Can you help

SALHS committee member Ron Dale is currently in the process of writing a book on the history of Stanstead Abbotts. If you have any information, authentic stories, photographs or any other memorabilia, please contact Ron or any of the committee members who will be glad to pass any material on to him or arrange for him to speak to you in person. We hope to have the book ready for printing and available to members and the public later next year

If you have anything of value call 05601 322317.

The River Lea And Stanstead Abbotts

Life time village resident, Richard Atkins, began the local history groups first meeting with a short talk on the River Lea and its importance to Stanstead Abbotts. He explained that as far back as the time of King Alfred the river Lea has played an important role in the life of the vil-

lage. The King had 3 channels cut in the river Lea at Waltham which left a Danish fleet stranded blocking access to the Thames. Unfortunately this led to the area becoming prone to regular flooding, leading to the creation of new locks on the river between 1840 and 1850. Cont'd overleaf



Passengers queuing for pleasure boat trips on the River



The River Lea and Stanstead Abbots—continued

The original Stanstead lock stood near Riverside Cottages. From the 17th Century the river became an important trading route from London especially when malt from the areas numerous maltings was shipped down the river to London breweries. Barges also carried grain from local mills to the capital. Some years ago local excavations discovered a number of old barges buried one on top of the other.

Apart from its significance as a trading route the Lea now became a major source of recreation for Londoners. During the late 19th and early 20th century the river attracted over 105,000 people who used the river and the local area for recreation. Among the boats in use were two ex naval

steam pinnaces, the Mirabelle and the Tottenham Belle. The skipper of one of these boats, Bill Kitts, lost his only son when a bullet from the rifle range at a fairground ricocheted and hit him in the head and killed him instantly.

The bridge in the High Street was originally a toll bridge charging pedestrians 2d to cross and more for horses and waggons. The current bridge was opened in 1926.

All this time the threat of flooding continued; on three occasions during the First World War the river burst its banks, nothing was done to protect the area as it was being allowed to flood to protect the gunpowder mills further downstream at Waltham

Abbey. Further floods in the 20th century left houses in South Street with four feet of water in them, whilst in 1947 floods caused by melting snow flooded the whole village including Gypsy Hill in Great Amwell. The last significant flooding took place in 1968, when the High Street was under water. Since major flood relief works were carried out after that there have been no serious floods in the village and long may that continue.

On 30th April 1950 a large rubber dump with 7000 tons of rubber in St Margarets caught fire; the smoke could be seen for a hundred miles and lasted for ten days, with 15 Fire Brigades attending. Fortunately there was no shortage of water as it was located next to the river.

Richard was able to answer a number of questions from the audience and was thanked by the Chairman for a fascinating talk.



Stanstead Mill Late 19th Century

Forthcoming Events

Fri July 20th Visit to St. Margarets church with guided tour. Meet 7.30pm

Sun July 29th Visit to St James church. Meet 2.30pm.

If you wish to attend either of the above please contact Janet Dance on 01920 871262 or email jdance50@yahoo.co.uk

Fri September 14th Talk and guided tour of Stansteadbury. 7.30pm.

Members Exclusive Please contact Charles Lovick on 01920 871721 or email at secretary@salhs.org.uk.

Fri October 19th Quiz Night in the Parish Hall. 7.30pm. Further details later.

Fri November 9th In Memoriam. Talk by Terry Collins, in the Parish Hall. 7.30pm Looking in detail at the names on the 1914-1918 War Memorial.

Fri November 23rd Maltings in Hertfordshire Talk by Guy Horlock. 7.30pm

Who's who

Below are details of the SALHS committee for the next year.

Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Charles Lovick
e-mail: secretary@salhs.org.uk	

Treasurer	Glenis Collins
Schools Liaison	Janet Dance
Public Relations	Bob Hunt
	Andrew Day
Archivist/Web Site	Brian Johnson
Historians	Ron Dale
	Ray Dixon

Parish Council Rep	Julia Davies
Committee Member	Pam Harris

General Enquiries

Tel 05601 322317

Admin@salhs.org.uk