

S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 13

Editor—Terry Collins

January 2015

In Memoriam

This year being the centenary of the outbreak of the first World War, it was only appropriate that one of our monthly meetings should focus on this topic. I first gave this talk two years ago in November 2012 on the names on the Stanstead Abbotts War Memorial. Since then I have carried out a lot more research on those 32

men and also on those named on the memorial plaque in St Margaret's church as well as a number not mentioned on either memorial,

and two men who have commemorative plaques in St James church. In order to get this information I have used a number of websites such as Ancestry, Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Regimental Sites as well as paying visits to the National Archives at Kew to look at original unit War Diaries. I have now found more information on all of them including almost all of those names on which I had virtually no information before.

I have also managed to get photographs of some of the men named as well as pictures of the cemeteries where they were buried or the me-

morials on which they are commemorated. In addition I have pictures relating to the units they served in or the weapons they may have used and the medals which they may have been awarded. In due course all this material will be placed on the SALHS website.

One of the most interesting events of the evening concerned one of the men named on the Stanstead Abbotts memorial, Joseph Hinson. I knew that one of his relatives

would be attending and would have with her his 'death penny, and scroll, but I was surprised when, during the break I was asked by another lady, who had brought them along. I pointed the person out and saw them later in conversation, but when I spoke to them I discovered that they were both relatives of Joseph Hinson but they had never met before. It certainly is a small world.

It was interesting to see the number of articles members had brought along. They ranged from a Princess Mary tin, one of over 2 million sent out to all members of the forces for Christmas 1914, containing cigarettes

or tobacco and sweets, or chocolate for the nurses serving overseas, to a 1913 air rifle used by Scouts to give then military training. I was fortunate enough to be able to borrow a Mark III Lee Enfield rifle from 1917 with Arabic markings, used in the Middle Eastern campaign. There were a number of medals on show including the British War Medal, The Victory medal and the 1915 Star, collectively known at the time as 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' named after comic characters.

Almost half of those named on the War Memorials have no known grave and many of them are commemorated on either the Menin Gate in Ypres or the Thiepval Memorial on the Somme. Looking at the list of countries where the major campaigns took place, France, Belgium, Turkey, and Palestine, men from Stanstead Abbotts were represented at all of them. From the feedback we have received it seems that the audience found it an interesting and thought provoking evening and thanked us very much.

Terry Collins



The Buntingford Line Part 2

Our January meeting saw the welcome return of Stephen Ruff with the second part of his entertaining history of the Buntingford line. Those of you that attended his first talk will remember that it finished at Much Hadham station.

This station had a twin track at the station allowing trains to pass each other. In 1920 there was a staff of seven plus two or three plate layers. In all the photographs of the time the station master really looks as if he is the master sometimes wearing a frock coat. There was a footbridge across the track which was taken down in the 1930's together with the waiting room.

The last passenger service ran on the 14th November 1964 although goods trains continued in use for another year. For some time after the closure of the line to the public it was still being used by small trains run by a local business Wickhams, they had been using the line to run their trains during the day from about 10.30 until 15.00 with a British Rail driver. The track was finally lifted in 1966.

Adjoining Much Hadham station stood the windmill built in 1820 as a status symbol. The last built in England and the second tallest in the country. It had 8 sails one of only seven of its type in the country. Next to the windmill was the porters house. Not far from the station stood Moor Place used as one of the country houses in the TV series 'Lovejoy'. In Much Hadham High Street stood Ye Olde Red Lion Inn, dating from the 15th Century which closed in 1971. A report about this inn had appeared in a Canadian newspaper that a hidden corridor had been located and the body of a girl had been found

which may have dated from the 18th Century, but Stephen has visited the inn in the past and there was nothing to indicate that there could have been a hidden area, but it made a good story.

Nearby stood Hadham Palace the country retreat of the Bishops of London, an extremely old building dating back to the 10th Century and it was in use until 1888. Much Hadham can claim to have nourished the Tudor dynasty as Henry V's wife Katherine was sent there in 1446 where her son Edmund



Much Hadham station in the 1960's

was born. He was the son of Katherine and Owen Tudor the father of Henry VII.

The next station along the line was Standon. Notable for the flour mill adjacent to the station which had its own siding, among the extensive sidings at this stop.

It was a small station and never had the amount of passengers as some other stations on the branch line. Another local building used by a TV production was the old school in Standon High Street, which appeared in the series 'Foyles War'

Heading north along the line the next stop is Braughing, which also served Puckeridge. This was another station which had twin tracks allowing trains to pass each other.

Parts of the station are still intact, and the station masters house and the waiting room are still standing having been converted into private dwellings, when the station was renovated by the son and grandson of the last station master. This station was used in the film 'Operation Bullshine' made in 1959 and starring Donald Sinden.

A new building can be seen as one of the original huts from Much Hadham Station has been removed and taken to Braughing, by the Buntingford Railway and Local History Society.

Heading north again the bridge over the river Rib had to be rebuilt and so boggy and wet is the area that solid ground was not found until a depth of 78 feet was reached. Further north is the only arched bridge on the line at Hay Street.

Another of the smaller and less used stations, Westmill is next along the line heading north. The waiting room and booking office were both wooden structures but even so it

still had its own siding. Stephen told us that on a cold day, rather than open up and heat the waiting room, passengers were invited into the booking office to keep warm. The local plate layers used to earn extra money by working in a local chalk pit filling wagons until in 1943 there was a collapse and two men were killed and a third seriously injured. The crossing gate at Westmill had been hit by trains a number of times over the years until in 1961 when it was demolished and removed.

The end of the line is reached next at Buntingford.

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The Buntingford Line Part 2 continued

This was originally built as a through station with a single platform on the up side of the line. The brick buildings and the station masters house were all original and remained in use until the line closed. Opposite the main buildings there was a large goods shed and stables together with a goods and coal offices

This station had the largest goods yard on the line with a number of sidings serving coal storage bays and cattle pens. The goods yard had its own office, weighbridge and loading dock. The signal box and water tower were both at the south end of the platform and behind it was another siding with both an inspection pit and a turntable.

All that now remains is the station masters house, but one of the wooden huts has been removed and

will hopefully be re-assembled at Braughing by the Buntingford Railway and Local History Society.

Occasionally an open day is held at Braughing station and from pictures I have seen it looks like it is



Buntingford Station

really worthwhile going along, as apart from the buildings that have been renovated and erected they have an original coach standing on a

stretch of track.

In August 1856 the first meeting was held to discuss building the railway and originally the Buntingford station was designed to be on a branch line that would carry on to Cambridge via Royston and Shepreth, one can only wonder what would things would have been like has this happened.

Throughout Stephen's talk there were lots of stories about the people who worked on or lived by the railway. Many of them were in the photographs we were shown and Stephen knew a lot of them by name. These were informative and very amusing, how he remembers it all, I don't know!

Stephen was thanked by Bob Hunt, Vice Chairman, and there were many questions from the audience. This was an extremely entertaining evening and we shall be asking him back again next year. *Terry Collins*

SALHS CHRISTMAS PARTY 2014

Friday 12th December and over 50 members of the Society turned out for the annual Xmas Party. Everyone had brought food to share and the Parish Hall was decked out with lights, Christmas trees and festive decorations. It was real good start to the Christmas season!

And in the true traditions of our Xmas parties we had entertainment of all kind. There was a quiz on the tables and another photo quiz on the wall...it was almost impossible to drag people away from them when the time came to judge the results!

Glenmire Terrace residents did a presentation on the history and current activities of this quiet backwater! Stories about chairs on roofs, sheds put up in people's lounges, muddy roads, rock and roll in leopard skin underpants were just a few of the modern history stories recounted by Imogen White and her band of conspirators! Everybody enjoyed it and agreed that next year it was CAPPELL LANE's turn...so get planning!

No party would be complete without Lynne and Pat doing their annual songs and as usual they had us all in raptures. Modesty forbids me to tell you much more but it all went down a storm!

Beth and Rob Gifford entertained us all to some fine music, Beth on her viola and Rob on his guitar.

Their music was a cross between ceilidh, classical and folk songs (writes the uninformed); their performance was magic and they had a wonderful reception...we've already booked them for next year!

Loads of prizes were given out to the winners of the competitions and to raffle winners; many thanks to everyone who donated prizes...I thought we were going on till midnight!

A great way to end our year and on behalf of your committee, our best wishes for a good 2015!

Ian White Chairman

A Sad Story

Underneath every gravestone lies a body with a story to tell. This one has two stories and two bodies: a grave discovery in St James churchyard by Brian Johnson and Gerald Coppen...

Gravestones are always sad, but the gravestone of Admiral Sir Henry Nicholson K.C.B in St James churchyard is particularly sad.

Sir Henry was Captain of the *Temeraire* during the bombardment of Alexandria in the Anglo Egyptian War of 1882, Captain of *HMS Asia* in 1884, Captain Superintendent of the Royal Dockyard at Sheerness in 1890 and finally he was appointed Commander-in Chief of the Nore at Chatham, one of the Navy's highest appointments, in 1896-97. He received his K.C.B. on his retirement in 1897.

Sir Henry chose to retire to Stanstead Abbots at Newlands, Hunsdon Road where he died in 1914. But he is not alone in his grave. Sir Henry and Lady Nichol-

son had a daughter Alice Lisle who married Major Ernest Vanrenen Royal Engineers, Chatham in 1893 and they had a son named Harry.

The boy followed his Grandfather into the Royal Navy and became a cadet officer at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. Harry Vanrenen died at the age of 15 from making a drink of potassium cyanide and swallowing it. From notes in his diary found afterwards it transpired that the boy was experimenting with different chemicals to support him in his training. At the inquest his father said that he was a happy boy but was fond of experimenting with chemicals.

The inquest jury found that his death was due to misadventure. He was given a funeral cortege with full naval honours, after the funeral service at the barracks, to Kingswear railway station from where the coffin was sent to Stanstead Abbots.

The coffin was carried on a gun carriage, draped in a Union Jack and

20 armed seamen and some of Harry's fellow cadet officers escorted the coffin to the station with a band playing the funeral march. The boy was buried in St James church in 1910 in the village where his grandfather had retired to. His father, being an army officer, would be liable to move every few years or whenever he was needed and at least there would be someone in England to tend his grave whilst his father may have been serving in India or elsewhere.

In 1914 Sir Henry died and he was buried in the same grave as his 15-year old grandson Harry, Cadet Henry Ernest Adrian Vanrenen, Royal Navy.

Ron Dale

Data Protection Act

In accordance with the above act we have to advise that the Society holds information on computer in respect of each member. This information is used for routine membership purposes only and remains confidential.

Forthcoming events

February Friday 13th	Theobalds-Hertfordshire's Lost Royal Palace by Stephen Poulter
March Friday 13th	The Poor Law in Hertfordshire by Alan Thomson
April Friday 10th	Ware History (With a Nod to S/Abbots) by David Pearman
May Friday 8th	AGM/ Talk Hidden Hertfordshire by Ann Marie Parker
June Friday 12th	St James Church History by Jonathon Trower
July Friday 10th	Markets Towns and Trade in Medieval Herts by Mark Bailey

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm
Members Free. Non Members £2 Tea, Coffee and biscuits included

The SALHS Committee May 2014

Hon. President	Ron Dale
Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Lynne Heraud
Treasurer	Glenis Collins
Website	Brian Johnson
Archivist/Historian	Ray Dixon
Archivist/Facebook	Andrea Coppen
Public Relations	Bob Hunt
School Liaison/ Programme Organiser	Janet Dance
Newsletter	Terry Collins
Parish Council Rep	Julia Davies
Co-opted Member	Jenny Johnson
Committee Members	Linda Gifford Gerald Coppen

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