

S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 28

Editor—Terry Collins

October 2018

HUNSDON HOUSE

Our speaker for the September meeting was Dr. Lee Prosser, who is the curator of historic buildings at Historic Royal Palaces, based at Hampton Court and his topic was a local one, namely Hunsdon House.

The house as we see it today is early 19th Century but below the existing building there are many remains of buildings of earlier times dating from as far back as the 15th Century when the house was originally built, it is believed by Sir William Oldhall in 1447. However he began his story with Richard, Duke of York, father of Richard III, who was given permission to build “a tower of stone. with lime and sand and to embattle the same”. It passed through other owners but by 1453 it was still unfinished.

The house seems to have been in the hands of Henry VIII before 1527 when he granted the custody of it to Henry Norris. It remained a favourite place for king Henry for he spent £2900 on new wooden fittings and glass. The following year Henry fled from London to Hunsdon to escape the ‘sweating sickness’, the plague.. In February 1576 Princess Mary was sent to live at Hunsdon and spent a long time there especially after Edward VI succeeded his father. In 1559 however Hunsdon ceased to be a royal residence when Elizabeth I granted it to Sir Henry Carey, her cousin, and made him 1st Lord Hunsdon. The house remained in the hands of the Carey family for over 100 years before passing into the Bluck family and then the Calverts. The only



picture of Hunsdon House in Tudor times is shown in the background of a painting of Prince Edward, later Edward VI (See above).

From then on Hunsdon House was in private hands. In 1623 Hunsdon House suffered a partial structural failure during a sermon recited by a local friar, attended by over 300 people during which part of the upper floor collapsed killing 94 people. In 1745 a brewer from Clapham, Josias Nicholson, bought the house but did not live very long to enjoy it, but with the aid of his nephew they filled in the moat as well as taking down some of the walls and the west wing.

More changes to the house took place in the 19th Century when Nicholas Calvert inherited the house in 1801, and he appointed the builder William Leach to renovate the house. In doing so he demolished a large part of it and reconstructed most of the rest. Mrs Calvert wrote in 1806, “there is hardly a bit of the old Hunsdon House standing, it will be nearly a new house” The building work finished in 1818 apart from the stable block which dates from about 1830. It was again renovated in 1860 and

Victorian elements were added. During the 1980’s a great amount of work was carried out at the house led by the archaeologist J.T Smith and over 3 tones of artefacts were found mostly in an old latrine in Tudor era cellars. The largest cellar discovered measures about 48ft x 18ft, and in the South garden a vaulted chamber with a brick and red tile floor with a well in the corner was discovered. The current house is only about a quarter of the size of the original palace building. In 1529 there were three Royal Parks surrounding the House where Henry VIII spent much of his time hunting and fishing.

Dr Prosser ended his fascinating and entertaining evening with details of the book he is planning to produce on the history of the house, not an easy task as he will need to examine many hundreds of documents relating to the building and its owners. He is fortunate in that the cost of the books production will be borne by the trust set up by one of the house’s previous owners the Laing family.

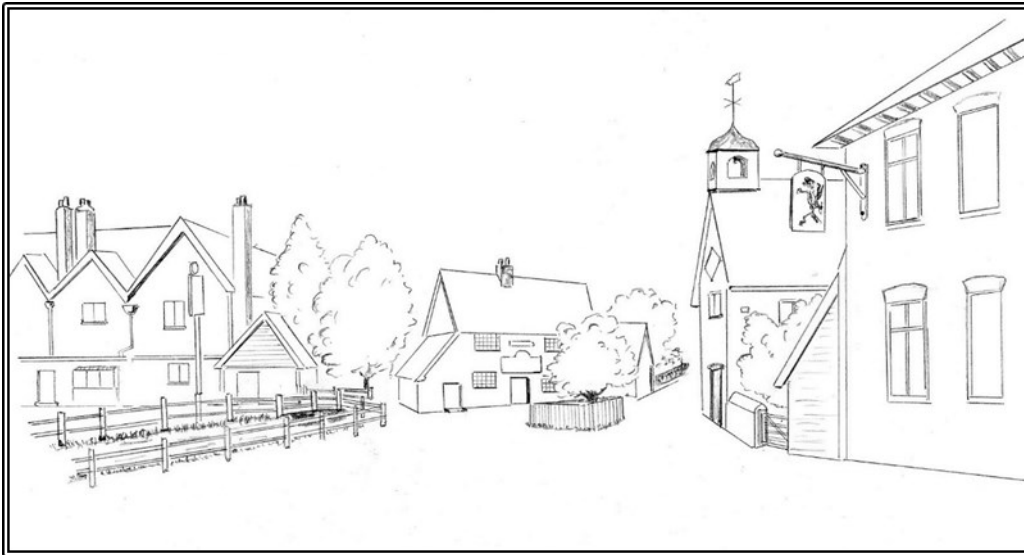
Terry Collins



Hunsdon House today

AT THE TOP OF THE HIGH STREET IN THE 1820s

The pencil sketch above shows the scene from Roydon Road looking towards the High Street and Cappel Lane as it would have appeared about 200 years ago. The familiar outline of the



Red Lion can be seen to the left with the fencing in front of it lining the millstream which in those days ran as an open channel across a wide triangular open public space. The High Street crossed the Millstream by a narrow bridge with the three roads meeting in front of the Clock House. The road junction was adorned with a tree surrounded by a wooden stockade which seems to have served the function of an early form of traffic island.

The building in the centre of the sketch appears to have a pub sign attached but as yet its name remains unknown. With the Swan public house close by to the left and behind the view in the sketch plus the

Bull just around the corner in the High Street this small part of the village had five public houses vying for business.

The unmistakable cupola of the Clock House can be seen to the right with Cappel lane leading away beyond, which was then a narrow by-way about half its current width. To the extreme right can be seen a substantial building with a pub sign indicating it was "The Griffin" public house. This was later to become part of a property known as the Mill House. Today the site is occupied by houses which are part of the Mill Race development. Much of the public highway to the right shown in front of the Griffin Pub now lies be-

hind a curved brick wall which encloses the gardens of the Mill Race homes. Off to the left of the view was a large wooden water mill which straddled the mill stream until it burnt down in 1862. This led to this

part of the village being considerably altered with a new brick built mill and the relocation of the road junction away from in front of the Clock House.

{This item is based on an article in the media section of the SALHS website, titled as (Back in time at) "**The top of the High Street**", by the same author}

[The sketch by the author was based on a painting by Frederick Luppino dated to the early 1800s]

Stuart Moye

SALHS Barbecue 2018

August 19th saw the now annual SALHS barbecue for members, attended this year by 31 people. What made it a little different this time was the location. Normally we hold the event in a members garden and this year was no exception apart from the fact that the garden in questions was at Stanstead Bury, (see picture right.) We were fortunate in that the rain that was forecast kept away for almost all the afternoon and we were able to hold the barbecue on the terrace.

As usual everyone attending brought food to share and it did not take long to fill the tables to overflowing, cooking the sausages and burgers was left in the capable hands of John Lloyd and Ray 'Dikko' Dixon.

Thanks must go Gini and Jonathon Trower for letting us use their wonderful garden for the event, even more so as they were on holiday at the time.

Terry Collins



Salisbury Hall and the de Havilland Museum

Alistair Hodgson, curator of the de Havilland Aircraft Museum, was our October speaker, telling us about its history and that of the adjacent building Salisbury Hall.

The hall was built in about 1507 by Sir John Cutts the treasurer to Henry VIII. It is a Tudor moated house which has not changed much in appearance in all the time it has been there. (See Below)



During the 17th Century Nell Gwynn stayed there and it is said that her ghost still walks the grounds. In the early 20th Century Lady Randolph Churchill was a frequent visitor and later her son Winston enjoyed sitting in the garden while preparing his parliamentary speeches.

In the 1930's the Hall was taken over by Sir Nigel Gresley who designed the famous Locomotive, the Mallard, while living in the house. When he left in 1938 the house was vacant. At the same time the aircraft designer and fanatic Geoffrey de Havilland came onto the scene. He was looking for a place to build his aircraft while at the same time the government were looking for a manufacturer to produce a small bomber aircraft that was not made with aluminium which was in high demand. De Havilland used a balsa wood skin to build his aircraft, the wings were fitted to the fuselage and the whole thing was held together by 4 bolts. This method of construction was thrown out by the government but

de Havilland continued on his own. When they were shown the aircraft in flight however they changed their minds and the go ahead was given for production. As the aircraft was being built in secret it was decided that to manufacture it at Hatfield, where the company was based at the time, would render it liable to German air attacks and so they moved to Salisbury Hall where there was less chance of this happening.

The design teams had moved into the hall by December 1939 and they had received an order for the government for 50 aircraft. This aircraft was to become one of the most famous aircraft of the war, the de Havilland Mosquito and by the end of the war over 7000 had been produced, most of them at the production facility at Salisbury Hall and the remainder in Canada.

The Mosquito was an all purpose aircraft that was used in a number of roles as a night fighter, fighter/bomber or reconnaissance aircraft. For most of the war it was the fastest and highest flying aircraft in the RAF. It could carry up to a 2000lb bomb load and was fitted with 4x.303 machine guns in the nose plus 4 x 20mm cannon above the nose. Its speed and manoeuvrability enabled it to carry out long distance flights to Berlin and Eastern Germany and on one occasion to Oslo and back a round trip of 1100 miles.

The government had told the company that the prototype Mosquito should be destroyed when the war ended but Bill Baird the engineer detailed to burn it did not do so and virtually hid it. The hall was still in use by de Havilland at the end of the war and it continued to be used by them until 1947 when it was left empty. In 1955 the house was purchased by Walter Goldsmith who was interested in obtaining anything to do with a Mosquito and was only too happy when he was offered the original aircraft which came back to

its home in 1958. The museum opened in 1959 with just the one exhibit, making it the oldest aircraft museum in the country. It took 5 years to rebuild the first Mosquito which was 50 years old in 1990.

One of the more famous aircraft being restored is the Comet, the worlds first successful jet airliner which was in use from the early 1950's until a series of fatal crashes led to all of them being grounded. Tests carried out on the crashed aircraft showed that the problem was stress at the corner of the square windows.

De Havilland developed successful jet engines after the war which were fitted into Vampire and Venom fighters for the RAF and the Sea Venom for the Navy. This particular aircraft is the one the Alistair himself is responsible for restoring, it will be a difficult job as everything needs to be replaced.

Currently the major project at the museum is the construction of a new hangar, after having been awarded a sizeable grant from the Lottery Heritage fund. The building is now to start shortly and the whole project is due to be completed in order to open towards the end of 2019. Apart from the new hangar area the new building will include a mezzanine floor which will include a teaching area enabling more school visits to the existing educational programme.

After answering questions Alistair was warmly thanked by an appreciative audience for an excellent evening.



The Famous de Havilland Mosquito

ST MARGARETS LISTED BUILDINGS

The following buildings are all worth photographing one day for a more detailed new book on the two villages with many new photographs not included before.

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY. Evidence of its Norman origins with 14th century and later alterations, Grade II listed.

MANOR HOUSE, Nr. CHURCH, now sub-divided for private accommodation, late 16th cent or early 17th century. Grade II listed. Has remains of interior wall paintings.

JOLLY FISHERMAN PUB. In 1736 a row of 3 cottages was demolished to make way for the building of this inn. Originally named *The George & Dragon*, on the arrival of rail in 1843 its name was changed to *The Railway Tavern*. Grade II listed.

BARN COTTAGES, THE TITHE. Former church tithe barn, now divided into three private residences. Built 17th century as a tithe barn and converted for private residence early 20th century. Grade II listed.

FORMER GRANARY of St. Margarets Farm group of surviving Clock House buildings. 18th century, grade II listed.

GARDEN HOUSE at the Clock House group of buildings of St. Margarets Farm. Built about 1760 and believed to have been moved at some date from Aramstone House, Kings Capel, Ross-on-Wye. Grade II listed.

GARDEN WALL, GATE PIERS & ORNAMENTAL IRON GATE, part of the old manor house near the Clock House, 17th century with iron gates 18th century, bearing heraldry of the Lake family who were once resident. Grade II listed.

OCTAGONAL BUILDING, formerly a dovecot, part of the St. Margarets farm group, 17th century, grade II listed.

LONG BARN, part of the 17th century St. Margarets farm group, grade II listed.

ST. MARGARETSBURY, former manor house of Septimus Croft, now private residential apartments. Re-built 1889/90 to incorporate the old rectory manor house of Rev. Stephen Pratt dated circa 1760. Grade II listed.

RYE COMMON PUMPING STATION built 1882, Hoddesdon Road, St. Margarets. Grade II listed.

WATER BOARD COTTAGE built 1882 for New River Company's engineer. Grade II listed.

Ron Dale 2017

The SALHS Committee June 2017

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 Bob Hunt
Secretary Lynne Heraud
Treasurer Glenis Collins
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Archivist/Facebook Andrea Coppen
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Committee Members:
Linda Gifford
Gerald Coppen
Rob Gifford
John Lloyd
Rosemary James

Website Manager Brian Johnson
General enquiries email
Admin@salhs.org.uk

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

November 9th 2018 River Lee from Luton to Leyton
by Richard Thomas
November 11th 2018 WWI Beacon –Easneye 6.30 –8.00pm
Food available by ticket via the Red Lion to be
ordered by **30 October**
December 14th 2018 Christmas Party—**Members Only**
January 11th 2019 TBA
February 8th 2019 History of Tea - Tim Turner from Swords

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm

Members Free. Non Members £2 Tea, Coffee and biscuits included