

*Potters Bar & District
Historical Society*

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The Newsletter

January 1989

Vol.5 No.2

The Chairman wishes a happy and prosperous 1989 to you and your families and the Society, he also thanks those who sent him Christmas cards, not that they will gain any extra favours!!

For those members who might not have heard our vice-President, Helen Baker, passed peacefully away in early November - see obituary inside.

At this time last year twenty members were urged to pay their subs so that the membership would reach 150. This year if those members who receive their final reminder pay up the figure should be 187. Now last year instead of reaching 150 the final total was 162, with the same effort one suggests we should reach 200! Judging from the number of new members since September it is not impossible.

IT IS UP TO YOU.

PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION IS IMPORTANT.

Perhaps the most exciting news is the possibility of a flourishing group in South Mimms, which was desired by the Chairman when he first took office. The new impetus has come from Beverley and Andy Benson, 70, Blanche Lane. A notice has been put in the Parish Paper requesting people in South Mimms to turn out their old relics and memorabilia. It is a sincere wish that this venture is successful and thanks to Beverley, Andy and their supporters for the good work.

If any member of the Society, who was once resident in South Mimms, has objects or memories that could be of use, please contact the above and find out more.

2 Thanks are due to everyone who helped or attended the public meeting in October, entitled, "Potters Bar: A Pictorial Look Back." It proved to be very successful as we gained eight new members, £117 profit from the sales of our publications and part of the return on the entrance fees, and even more supporters of our cause.

HELEN MACGREGOR BAKER
(1908-88)

Helen was the youngest child of a large family and was born in Chile, where her father David Angus was a civil engineer. She also lived in South Africa for sometime and had relatives all over the world. This was because her forebears were also civil engineers who helped build the railways in various countries.

At one time she lived in Borehamwood, but subsequently moved to Potters Bar where, apart from raising her family, she soon became involved with the Potters Bar Society, in particular, the Footpath Group. Along with Dick, her late husband, they produced the booklet, 'Footpath Walks Around Potters Bar.' It was while attending inquiries on footpath diversions and closures that Helen became interested in local history, as one had to prove a case by providing evidence to support it.

In 1966 she joined this Society when the subs were 7s 6d, became a Committee member in 1972, Archivist in 1976 and in recognition of all her devoted services was made a vice-President at the last A.G.M.. For almost twenty years she worked with painstaking accuracy in collecting and collating records of South Mimms and Potters Bar, no stone was left unturned in the pursuit of her objective and her final conclusions were rarely wrong. Having acquired this vast knowledge she gave lectures to many different groups of people, keeping accurate records of all her talks. She also published numerous articles, but her great regret was that her work on the Cutbush nurseries was never printed.

Helen also found time to become a committee member of the Barnet and District Record Society

and a council member of the Herts. Local History Council. Each year she prepared the Society's exhibition and took complete responsibility for selling the publications at the Herts. Local History Council conferences and the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society's Local History meetings.

Though Helen might have been regarded as tough and determined on occasions, there was the other side. One was always made welcome, even more so if one had the same passion for local history as she possessed.

Helen was justly proud of her Scottish ancestry and perhaps not many members know that she and the Queen Mother were both descended from Archibald Lyon, who married Margaret Dunlop, and before that to Sir John Lyon of Glamis.

The Society has lost an irreplaceable local historian and one must be only too grateful for all her devoted labours over the years.

Our sympathy and condolences have been expressed to her son, John, and Margaret, her daughter, and a donation has been sent on behalf of the Society, to the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, as desired by the family.

Brian Warren

Those members who wish to make a personal donation please send to:-

Imperial Cancer Research,
PO BOX 123,
Lincoln's Inn Fields,
London,
WC2A 3PX

MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND the next meeting of the Potters Bar Town Twinning Association at their OPEN MEETING on Tuesday February 14th, at 8.00pm in Oakmere House.

The special guest speaker is Deputy Commissioner Richard Wells, Q.P.M., M.A.(Oxon) of the Metropolitan Police. He will be talking about policing London and making comparisons their counterparts in France and Germany.

SPRING LECTURE PROGRAMME - Monthly MeetingsMONDAY 23 JANUARY

'Some Aspects of 17th Century Hertford' by
Mr.A.Greening

Seventeenth century Hertford was a very small town, with probably not more than 1,000 people at the beginning of the century and less than 2,000 at the end. Its economy had improved after its drastic medieval decline; its great rival, Ware, was more populous and barely three miles away, and its nearness to London brought problems as well as advantages. But it was the County Town and it maintained all the panoply of a Borough.

A wide variety of crafts and trades were carried on in the town, leatherworking being especially prominent, and these craftsmen formed

the bulk of the Borough's freemen and regulated trade.

Mr.Greening is a founder-member of the Hertford and Ware Local History Society and he has been its Secretary since its formation in 1979. For some years now he has been researching these seventeenth-century Hertford Borough Freemen and trying to build up a picture of life in the town in the process. In his research he has used wills, inventories, Hearth Tax returns and the vast and only partially explored Corporation records.

THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY

'Girdles, Belts and Rings: London's Green Belt from 1580-1989' by Mr.A.J.Cooper

The talk will outline, "How and why London's Green Belt" came into being and the story of London's Ring Roads, the idea for which contributed to the concept of a "Green Belt."

Mr.Cooper has been a member of The Potters Bar Society and wrote its history. He joined this society in 1987 and as reported in the last newsletter has moved from Brookmans Park to Thriplow, near Royston.

'The Great Fire of London' by Mr.G.Milne

Mr.Milne works at the Museum of London and is at present in charge of a dig on the river front. He has written a book on the subject of his talk, which is fully illustrated in graphic detail.

In the talk he will be taking a new look at the historical evidence of the Great Fire of London, and combining this with evidence recently excavated from the site.

He will also consider how London was rebuilt after the catastrophe.

ALL MEETINGS IN OAKMERE HOUSE, downstairs, at 8p.m.

REMINDER:- FRIDAY 21 April ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MEMBERS' NEWS

Reg. and Nan. Crock have sent seasonal greetings to everyone who knew them. Reg. is now Meetings' Secretary for the Brackley Historical Society and is grateful for the experience he gained in that position with our Society.

Congratulations to our new members Dr.& Mrs Fawdry, on celebrating their Golden Wedding this month.

Our best wishes for the New Year go to Mr.Ottley and Mrs.Clare for a continued improvement in their health. Also, Mrs J.Christie.

We extend a welcome to the following new members and hope to see them at our monthly meetings, in the near future:- Miss D.Langmaid, Mrs A.Panglose, Mrs B.Fossett, Mrs B.Rawlings and family, Mrs E.Luxford, Mr.J.Wayth, Mrs T.Arnold, Mrs A.H.Marlow, Mr.R.P.Kingdom, Mrs J.Christie, Mr. & Mrs D.Simpson, Mr.J.Bulling, Mr. & Mrs A. Benson, Mr.G.E.Childs and Dr.Fawdry.

Thanks to Dan.Ruge-Cope for running off the maximum number of copies ever -170

6 WANTED - Can you help?

A) HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE

As a result of the gifts of Mr.Holmes and Mrs. H.M.Baker the Society possesses a complete run from 1961 to 1982, with the exception of the following:-

Winter 1962, Autumn 1963, April 1966,
December 1967, March 1968, September
1969 and November 1969.

B) SOUTH MIMMS & RIDGE PARISH PAPER

The Society has a complete run except for the following recent numbers. If you do not want yours perhaps you would donate them, or loan them for photocopying.

MISSING:- 1984 Feb., March, June.

1986 Jan., March, April, Sept., Oct.,
Nov., and Dec.

1987 January to October.

1988 March to August.

C) THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL PROGRAMMES

A complete run is held except for:-

1959-60, 1960-61, 1961-62, 1962-63
and 1977-78

It is possible there was no programme card in the very early years, perhaps some of our long-standing members can provide the answer.

If you are able to assist with any of these matters, please contact the Chairman.

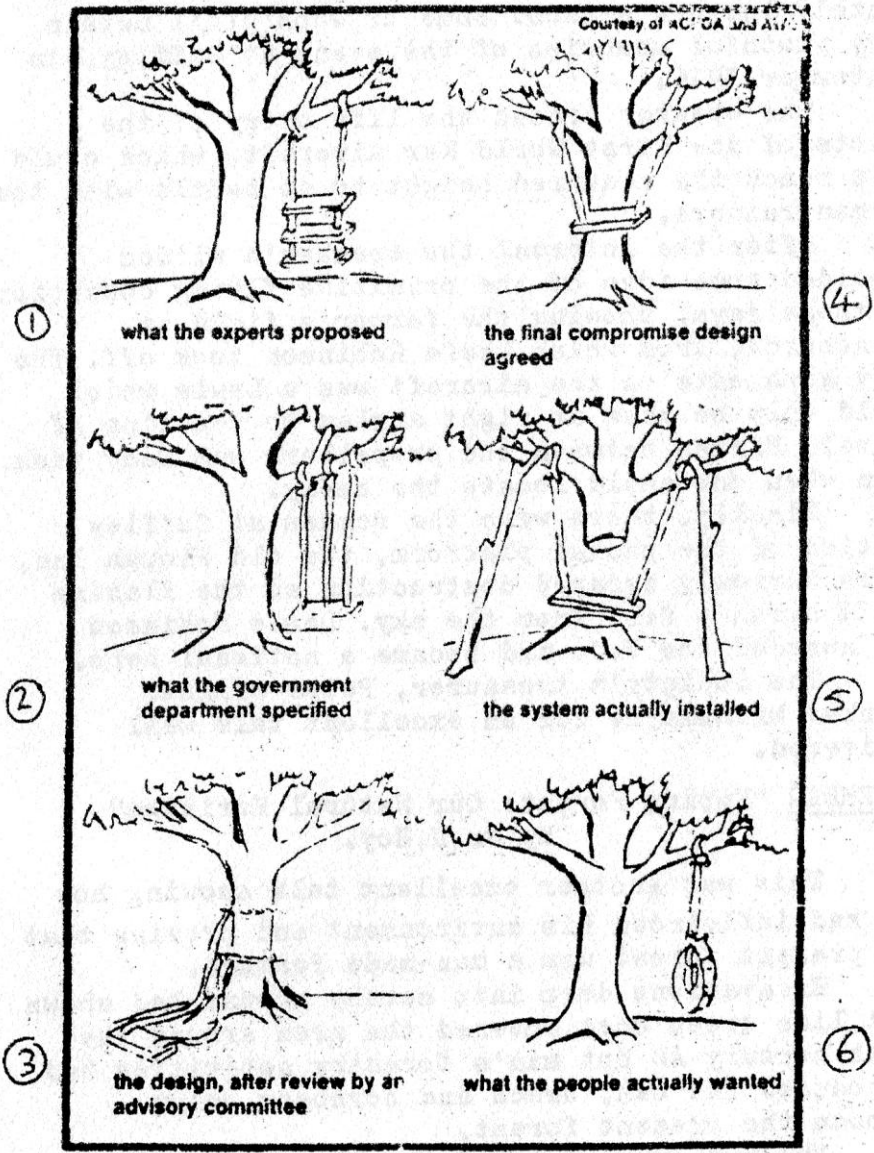
WILLYOTTS MANOR

The Herts. Archaeology Trust are supervising the excavations until the end of the month. So far results do not seem to have been very revealing, but Terry has been photographing the site.

BRUCE CASTLE MUSEUM, TOTTENHAM

Due to recent changes of staff the museum has been closed for research, but is now open daily, 1.00- 4.45pm, but only by appointment, ring 808-8772, if you are thinking of going.

Read the pictures as numbered down the side to gain the maximum benefit.



This was published in a British magazine, in Italy, and sent to the Chairman by his sister.

WINTER PROGRAMME REPORTSOCTOBER "Leefe Robinson and the Cuffley Airship"
by Mr.A.Dumayne.

As one would expect with a talk about Zeppelins there was a large audience to start the monthly lecture season. Some of whom still retain very youthful memories of the event at Cuffley, in September 1916.

The speaker traced the life story of the pilots of the First World War aircraft, which could just reach the required height to do battle with the German raiders.

After the interval the speaker's slides provided some idea of the primitive flying conditions of those days, showing the farmer's field at Hornchurch, from which Leefe Robinson took off. The only armaments on the aircraft was a Lewis which could only be used at right angles to the line of travel. Firing between the propellers was easy task, even when one could locate the enemy.

Finally, there were the scenes at Cuffley station of the packed platform, the old Plough Inn, which narrowly escaped destruction as the flaming SL II airship fell from the sky. Leefe Robinson was awarded the V.C. and became a national hero.

The Society's treasurer, Peter Wright, thanked Mr.Dumayne for an excellent talk well delivered.

NOVEMBER "Epping Forest: Our Natural Heritage"
by Mr.K.Hoy.

This was another excellent talk showing how man had influenced his environment and proving that the present forest was a man-made feature.

Excavations deep into marshy ground had shown that lime trees once covered the area around the ninth century AD but man's forestry activities had introduced the oak, beech and hornbeam which compose the present forest.

The Enclosure Acts of the 1820s allowed landowners to annexe large areas of the forest but by 1877 the City of London Corporation recovered the forest for use by the public. Land management had been carried out by the landowners as was shown by the coppiced and pollarded trees.

The speaker described some of the customs of 9
the forest, including the November 9 ceremony where
forest workers cut wood purely for their own needs
from midnight until dawn.

Lastly, Mr.Hoy's fine slides showed the
natural history aspect with many species of wild-
life, including snakes, birds and butterflies.

In the vote of thanks Mr.G.Eve included some
of his own personal reminiscences of Epping Forest
in the thirties.

DECEMBER "The Social History of Lighting"

by Dr.A.C.Lynch.

Dr.Lynch explained that he had first become
interested in the subject of his talk by reading a
book with the same title.

In his introduction the question was posed,
"How far does one need artificial light?" There
has always been sunlight and moonlight, though
the latter is often forgotten. About 1750 the
Lunar Society in Birmingham met monthly when the
moon was at its height. Artificial light is needed
for eating and continuing one's day's work.
However, the two main purposes for light are
trying to use a lamp to light up something else to
carry on with work and showing a light to guide
someone or to use as a signal.

The rest of the talk concentrated on the first
of those purposes. Dr.Lynch then suggested that
perhaps not everyone present realised that the
eyes had three divisions. First there was the lens,
then the part for seeing bright light and colour,
lastly the part for dim light and no colour. Man
does not see colours by moonlight and takes twenty
minutes to adjust to dimlight vision.

Using slides Dr.Lynch provided many
interesting facts as he traced the improvements in
lighting from the domestic fire, candles, rush-
lights, Bullseye lanterns, oil lamps, Argandlamps,
and Dag lamps, to the first demonstration of gas
lighting and finally the electric light.

Joan Groves, chairman, then invited Cyril
Overend to propose a vote of thanks for a very
stimulating lecture.

POINTS OF INTEREST FROM THIS YEAR'S, 'Royal Institution Christmas Lectures' by Prof.G.Roberts.

- 1807 Pall Mall was lit by gas lamps for George III's birthday.
- 1808 Sir Humphrey Davy demonstrated electric light for the first time.
- 1878 The first floodlit football match at Bramall Lane using carbon arc-lamps.

WILLING TO ASSIST!

A) Displays at monthly meetings

For just over a year an additional feature of the monthly meetings has been to provide members with a small display of some of the artefacts held by members of the committee.

It has also provided another talking point during the interval.

If anyone has any items hidden away at home, which they feel might be of interest to other members or would be prepared to take the responsibility for one month's display, please let a committee member know.

B) Maps

As most members are aware we sell two maps, originally drawn by Helen Baker, who was trained as a map tracer, and that is why they are so good.

For many years Helen hand-coloured them herself, more recently Brian Warren has undertaken the task. In November and December four members of the committee met at Peter Trotman's house and worked as a team to colour the maps.

If you feel you are able to assist in this work and would like to assist, please let Brian Warren know. A steady hand and even colouring are the requirements, plus the fact that only four people can work at any one time under the present arrangements.

To give members some idea of some of the requests that have been answered, mainly by the Archivist, in the last three months.

- 1) Information on a Mr.H.Brastard, a piano manufacturer, who lived in Heath Drive in the 1930s.
- 2) Mr.Green from Birmingham enquired concerning a relative of his, P.c.Green, who won the King's Police Medal for rescuing two labourers when the sewers were being constructed in The Causeway, in 1927. He thought it was two children.
- 3) Continued research on the history of Potters Bar Cricket Club from the newspapers.
- 4) The new developers of the Twyman's site requested a history of the site.
- 5) P.c.Swales has requested assistance on the history of Potters Bar Police Station, as it is one hundred years old in 1991.
- 6) Maureen Brown from Linslade was met at the LAMAS conference and on looking at our 1594 map saw the name Hodsden. Now she has received all the information about the family in our area in the early 17thC.
- 7) Also at the LAMAS conference Mr.C.Blake said his grandfather's brother was Edwin Chas. Mott, who held the local nurseries before Catchpole, Halsey & Drage. Correspondence has now been exchanged. It was his first conference.
His wife, Mrs C.Blake is secretary of the Shepherds Bush Local History Society, and would be willing to undertake research in that area for our members. Her address is:- The Secretary,
Shepherds Bush Local History Society,
22a, Collingbourne Road, London, W12 0JQ
This is one benefit of attending conferences, the exchange of information.
Her Society has two publications for sale:-
Around the Bush-The War Years 1914/18 & 1939/45
£2.25
Around the Bush-An Illustrated History of
Shepherds Bush
£2.00

- 8) Cyril Overend has been asked to write a history of St. John's Methodist Church, Baker Street, for their next anniversary. If anyone has any information please inform Cyril, sooner rather than later.

LONDON and MIDDLESEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S
PROGRAMME 1989

Lectures are held in the Lecture Theatre of the Museum of London, EC2, at 6.30pm (AGM 6.15pm) with coffee served beforehand from 6.00pm (AGM 5.30pm) in the Lecture Theatre Foyer.

WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY AGM & Presidential lecture:
'The Tower and its influences' by Dr.D.Renn.

Dr.D.Renn lived locally for many years, was on the committee of the Barnet & District Record Society in 1949, and wrote their bulletin No.10, on South Myms Castle, in 1957.

WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH 'Current work in Environmental
Archaeology in London by Jas.Rackham.

WEDNESDAY 19 APRIL 'Reconstructing Medieval
London by Derek Keene.

THE MUSEUM OF LONDON:- MUSEUM WORKSHOPS 1.10 p.m.

THURSDAY 26th January 'CLOCKS and WATCHES'
by Chris Ellmers

This is an informal talk offering those who might be interested to meet specialist staff and see objects from the Museum's collections at close quarters. Attendance is limited.

All the workshops this session are on 18th century themes to mark the opening of the new gallery.

If anyone is interested it might be advisable to phone the Museum first - 01-600-3699.