



# NEWS LETTER

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PUBLISHED BY POTTERS BAR  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

POTTERS BAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CHAIRMAN

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Formed in 1959 to encourage the preservation of things of local interest and to study both local and general historical matters. Meetings are held throughout the winter months at intervals of approximately three to four weeks, details are exhibited on the public library notice boards or may be obtained from the secretary. Membership is open to all interested people. Subscriptions are 50p. for those over twenty-one years of age and 25p. for those under twenty-one.

All members of the public are welcome to attend our meetings whether members of the Society or not.

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EDITORIAL

It is now three years since our modest journal first appeared and like a young child took its first tottering steps into the world, but now with those three years and four issues behind us it is time for us to move forward more confidently. Our Banda reproductions have served a useful purpose in our development and given us much needed experience, but the time has now come for us to change to a better process and at the same time to take advantage of the opportunity to give our journal a more attractive appearance. We hope that you like the new style PBHS News Letter, your comments on the subject would be most welcome.

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POTTERS BAR THEN AND NOW

This is to be the tittle of the first lecture of the 1972/3 season. The showing of Mr. Butchers slides of Potters Bar in the earlier years of this century at the begining of the present session proved to be so popular that the committee felt that you would like to see a selection of these contrasted with photographs of the same sites as they are to-day. The date for this meeting has not yet been fixed but it will probably be in the third week of September.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

The Society is always glad to receive photographs and old picture postcards of the district as it was in days gone by, either as gifts or as loans for copying purposes. Lenders can be assured that photographs lent to the Society will be returned in the same condition as that in which they were received.

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Hon. Editor: C.T.Overend, 30 Deepdene, Potters Bar.

ALL MIMSY...

...were the borogroves, wrote Lewis Carrol in "Jabberwocky" and Mimsie Slopcorner was a character invented by Beachcomber (J.B.Morton) of the Daily Express. Both these masters of nonsense clearly delighted in the sound of Mims, Though whether their coining of MIMSY was, consciously or sub-consciously, suggested by the place-name MYMMS who can say?

For adirect literary reference to it, however, one can turn to John Fletcher's seventeenth century play "Wit Without Money". In this a Lady's servants are ordered to drive their mistress out of London and, because they do not want to, they exchange this conversation:

Shorthose: ...may London wayse from henceforth be full of holes and coaches crack their wheels, may zealous Smiths so housel all our Hackneys that they may feel compunction in their feet and tire at Highgate, may it rain above all Almanacks till Carriers sail, and the King's Fishmonger ride like Bike Arion upon a trout to London.

Humphrey: At S. Albones, let all the Inns be drunk, not an Host be sober to bid her worship welcom.

Shorthose: Not a Fiddle, but allpreached down with Puritans; no meat but Legs of Beef.

Humphrey: No beds but Wool-Packs.

Shorthose: And those so crammed eith Warrens of starved Fleas that bite like Bandogs; letMims be angry at their S. Bel-Swagger, and we pass im the heat on't and be beaten abominably, beaten horse and man, and all my Ladies linnen sprinkled with suds and dishwater....

What does it all mean? Sugdens "Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare & his Fellow Dramatists" offers a few suggestions. "S. Bel" stands for Sanctus Bell which being the smallest in a church, was applied to anything trifling - in this case to the st. Albans innkeepers folly in getting drunk - and the "Woolpacks" I should imagine is an allusion to the St. Albans inn of that name. But, as St. Albans would not have been reached till Mymms was passed, it is difficult to see how the St. Albans innkeepers' "S. Bel-Swagger" could have made "Mims... ..angry". It looks as if Fletcher did not know the road as well as he proffessed. "Dishwater" Sugden equates with ditchwater and associates with Mymms Wash. Is this so far fetched? The Oxford English Dictionary does not suggest that dishwater can have this meaning, though it does - surprisingly - give 'suds' the possible meaning of floodwater and muck thrown up by a ride through a water-splash (such as must have bespattered the traveller at Mymms Wash).

But when all is said and done, the passage remains not more than a farrago of nonsense. 'The smallness of the village' concludes Sugden - referring to Mymms - 'and the absurdity of the name give such point as there is to the jest'.

Absurdity? That is, perhaps, putting it too strong; but its oddity does seem to have appealed to the writers. It was

probably the sound of the name that led J. Crofts to include in his book "Packhorse, Waggon and Post" the following graphic passage:

'While the citizen took his evening pipe, and the tired farmer dozed by his fire, the carrier's gangs were still splashing thigh deep through Mimms Wash.'

he could, for his purpose, have chosen any one of the countless fords that had to be crossed by the carriers throughout the country. Why then choose Mymms? Surely only because of its sound.

For the word does have a euphony. Mymms, when it gets in the news, is a gift for the headline writers, inspiring them to alliteration unparalleled. Witness THE MATCHLESS MAIDENS OF MYMMS to which Mrs. Brittain alluded in her entertaining talk to the Society on South Mymms. Had they lived anywhere else, the effect would have been far less arresting. Would, for example, THE PEERLESS POPPSIES OF POTTERS BAR have caught the public eye in the same way that the MATCHLESS MAIDENS OF MYMMS did? Again "The Times" some years ago, given Moffatts Farm at North Mymms as the subject of a fourth leader, hit on the heading MISS MUFFET OF MYMMS.

The name is, above all, memorable. MIMS was found to be a conveniently pronounceable contraction of the Monthly Index of Medical Specialities. Indeed, one wonders whether this unwieldy title may not be a back-formation from the more memorable MIMS!

Mymms, it seems, is a name just for MIMicry.

M. Tomkins.

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#### SPEAKER FOR THE A.G.M.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Wednesday 12th. April at Mountgrace Lower School, The Walk. The meeting will be followed by a lecture entitled "Waltham and its Abbey" given by Dr. K. Bascombe. This is the talk we should have had on Friday 25th. February but which had to be cancelled because of the miner's strike. As at all our meetings, non-members will be welcome. The talk will follow the business part of the meeting which should be concluded by approximately 8.30 p.m.

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#### THE LIBRARY

The Society's Library is now lodged with Mrs. H.M. Baker, 12 Oakroyd Close, telephone 53659. Members wishing to borrow or consult any of the books should first make arrangements with Mrs. Baker. A list of the books and papers in the library was issued a few years ago but is now somewhat outdated. It is hoped to be able to publish a new and revised list in the next issue of the News Letter.

ROMAN ROAD FROM VERALAMIUM TO CHESHUNT

(Map Ref. T.L.30SW.3II028)

The Roman Road that is on the Cuffley Ridgeway continues to Cuffley Hill Farm, and then in straight line to the top of King James Avenue and then turns at a right angle towards the north-east to follow the modern road (Station Road) to Goffs Oak. (Ref. 323030)

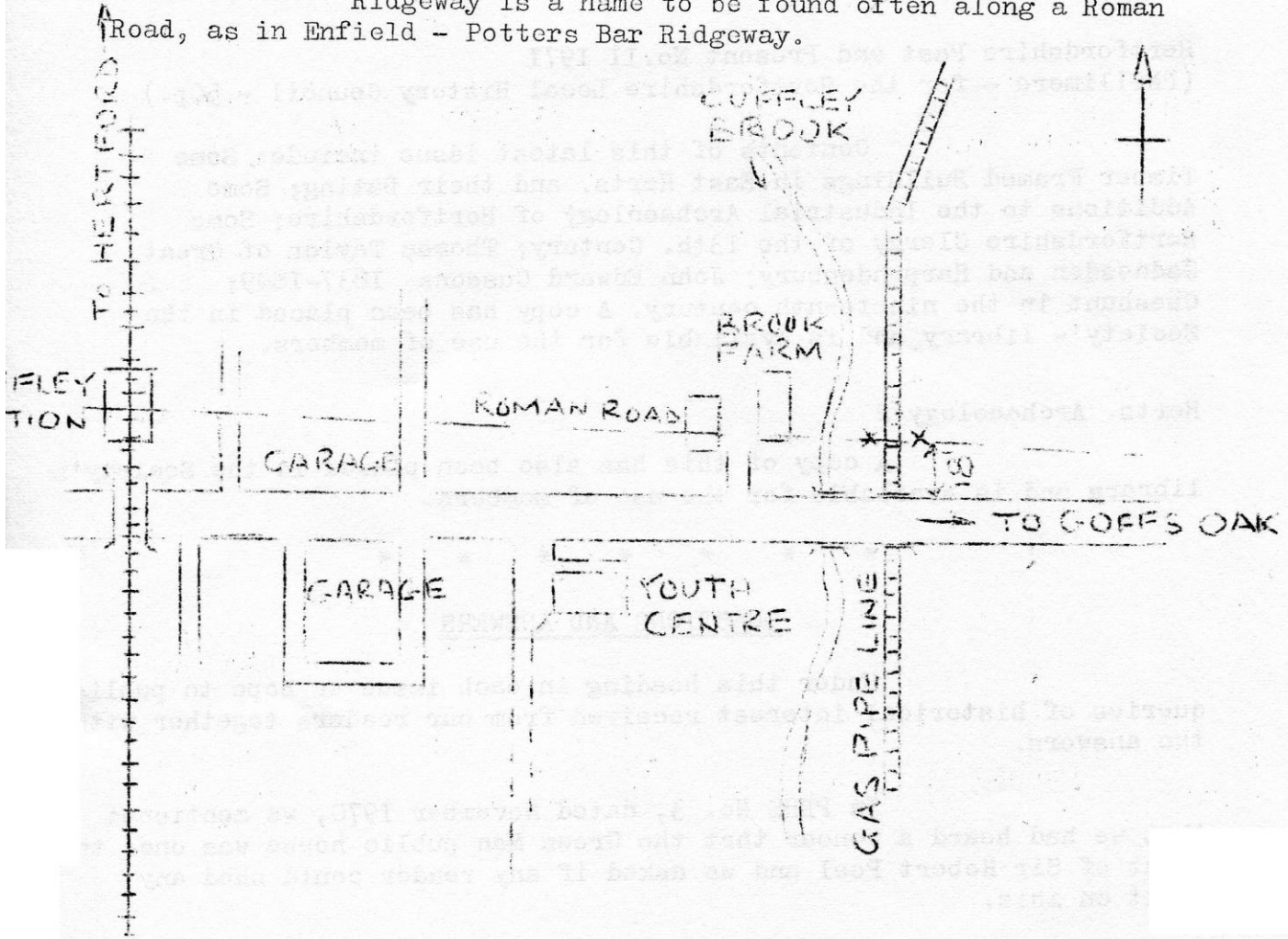
At the start of Cuffley Hill at Brook Farm the Roman road was visible for a short time while the gas pipe-line was being laid.

It has long been thought that the road existed from Verulamium to Cheshunt as such a road was mentioned by Salmon who wrote 'History of Hertfordshire' published in 1728.

In his book he says "There seems also to be a corresponding Military Way, but what I lay no stress upon, from Cheshunt to Verulam, which after we had gone the mile and a half through Goffe's Lane to North Hall (i.e. Northaw) Common, is called the Ridgeway from the Roman agger, towards Bell Bar, so through the parish of Ridge to Colney Street that leads to St. Albans."

And in the same History Book he says "Cheshunt which hath a corresponding Military Way to it from the Ridgeway Point through Goffe's Lane is still visible."

Ridgeway is a name to be found often along a Roman Road, as in Enfield - Potters Bar Ridgeway.



Cuffley Ridgeway was improved by William Strode at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the name and tradition of Roman origin existed at an earlier date as shown by Salmon's reference in 1728.

Early in 1971 the pipe line of the Gas Board reached Brook Farm and Mr Lee and myself (East Herts. Arc. Soc.) tried to keep watch while the trench was being dug. Late one Sunday afternoon we spotted the agger of the road. It was about 3ft. down and was eleven inches thick with a course of large flints at the bottom and small flints and gravel at the top. The width of the road at the time of the trench being dug was 17ft. Beneath the large flints was virgin clay and no other signs of disturbance whatsoever.

I went the following day and the site was filled in with thick yellow clay and rammed down with a bull-dozer.

K.W.Ward.

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#### RECENT BOOKS

Archaeology: Discoveries in the 1960s.  
Edward Bacon (Cassel £3.50)

Mr. Bacon has managed to cover a decade of world-wide archaeological discovery in one volume - no mean feat. The book contains a wealth of illustrations and a comprehensive index. A series of maps shows the location of the sites discussed.

Hertfordshire Past and Present No. II 1971  
(Phillimore - for the Hertfordshire Local History Council - 50p.)

Contents of this latest issue include: Some Timber Framed Buildings in East Herts. and their Dating; Some Additions to the Industrial Archaeology of Hertfordshire; Some Hertfordshire Clergy of the 13th. Century; Thomas Taylor of Great Gaddesden and Harpendenbury; John Edward Cussons, 1837-1899; Cheshunt in the nineteenth century. A copy has been placed in the Society's library and is available for the use of members.

Herts. Archaeology 2

A copy of this has also been placed in the Society's library and is available for the use of members.

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#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Under this heading in each issue we hope to publish queries of historical interest received from our readers together with the answers.

In PBHS No. 3, dated November 1970, we mentioned that we had heard a rumour that the Green Man public house was once the haunt of Sir Robert Peel and we asked if any reader could shed any light on this.

It is the Green Man, Barnet which was visited by Peel. The confusion has undoubtedly arisen because at that time the northern end of Barnet High Street was in South Mymms Parish as was Potters Bar. Writing about the inns of Mymms in his book "South Mymms", Dr. Britain says, "The Green Man, formerly a large posting house, was a favourite resort of Sir Robert Peel." Incidentally he also mentions that, "...in 1753 it was the meeting place for beating the bounds of South Mymms Parish."

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### ARCHAEOLOGICAL REVIEW

#### Excavations at Pope's Farm, Wildhill, Hatfield.

It is understood that the Hatfield and District Archaeological Society will continue their excavations at Pope's Farm this year.

The Potters Bar Historical Society hope that members and their friends will be able to assist our colleagues in Hatfield and thereby gain valuable experience in excavating techniques for the possible future needs of our district. If you are interested then please contact a member of our committee. Alternatively go straight to Pope's Farm one week-end when excavations have started this spring and summer where you will probably find a member of this Society. Given sufficient support we are hopeful to arrange tuition within the Society.

#### Recent Archaeological Discoveries.

The annual conference of the Hertfordshire Archaeological Council will be held at the Mid Herts. College, Welwyn Garden City on Saturday March 18th. 1972 from 10.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Tickets to the conference 50p. - senior citizens and students 25p. for all day. For the afternoon session (from 2.00 p.m.) tickets will be available at half price as long as seating is available. Luncheon can be obtained for 50p.

The programme is as follows :-

- |       |   |                                  |
|-------|---|----------------------------------|
| 10.30 | Introduction.   |                                  |
| 10.40 | Three Houses and their Occupants. An interim report on the excavations at Pope's Farm, Wildhill, Hatfield | Arthur Jones.                    |
| 11.15 | Skeleton Green 1971   | Clive Partridge.                 |
| 11.50 | Gorhambury Excavations 1972   | David S. Neal, F.S.A.            |
| 12.30 | Lunch   |                                  |
| 2.00  | The Lockleys Roman Sites  | Tony Rook.                       |
| 2.35  | Recent Mesolithic Finds.  | R.M. Jacobi and<br>Adrian Gibson |
| 3.30  | Tea   |                                  |
| 4.00  | The Discovery of the Classis Britannica Fort at Dover   | Brian Philp.                     |

## SALISBURY HOUSE AND WYLLYOTTS MANOR

A joint committee of this Society and the Potters Bar Society was set up about a year ago to attempt get some, if not all, of the very few remaining buildings of historical interest in the district preserved. The two buildings where the need for action was most pressing were Salisbury House in the High Street and Wylllyotts Manor. It was on these two then and, more particularly, on the latter that the committee's deliberations were concentrated.

### Salisbury House

This house was built in the eighteenth century (see PBHS News Letter No. 4) and has been a private dwelling from that time until it was taken over by the Council about eight years ago. Their intention was to demolish the building and to use the site for an old peoples home. The buildings were, however, required for other council purposes until such time as a new civic centre could be erected. About a year ago it became apparent that this usage would not continue much longer for new civic buildings were being erected on the Wylllyotts Manor site.

Last spring Councillor Fielding and Mr. Cole, the Council's Engineer and Surveyor, conducted members of the joint committee on a tour of inspection of the house. It was discovered that a certain amount of repair work would have to be done if the building was to be preserved, notably to the roof and to the South-West corner of the building where damage had been caused by an outbreak of dry-rot in the cellar. The council representatives were urged to do something about this before it started to spore, it being pointed out that eradication at that stage would not be very expensive. The joint committee also asked the Council to consider retaining this building, the only one of its type in the district, as a residence for the warden of the proposed home and as storage space. At the same time it was pointed out to the council that to recondition and adapt the house would be much cheaper than putting up a new building in its stead.

At the end of last November it was learned that the County Council had raised the grading of the building from III to II. Most of you will remember that this caused quite a furore in the Council Chamber with some of the Councillors accusing the two societies of bringing pressure to bear on the County Council. This of course was not true, the upgrading being at least as much a surprise to us as it was to them.

The Council has now decided to build its old peoples home at Oakmere and Salisbury House looks like being abandoned now that the activities which were carried on there are being transferred elsewhere.

### Wylllyotts Manor

Discussions as to how these buildings, house and barn, could be best used to serve the needs of the community while still retaining their character occupied most of the joint committee's time. What was proposed was that the buildings should be restored and used as a centre for arts and the social needs of the district. The barn would provide a useful medium sized hall with seating for about 50 people, while the rooms in the house could be used for smaller meetings and committee purposes. Storage space could also be provided for those societies requiring these facilities.



A report was prepared by the joint committee copies of which were sent to each member of the Council and to the relevant relevant council officers. The report included an estimate for the cost of the restoration proposals together with probable annual running costs and estimated returns from lettings. Copies of this report have been placed in this Society's library where they may be consulted by members. A summary of the main recommendations (copied from the actual report) is appended below.

In addition to this the Council has approached a firm of architects for their recommendations on the restoration of Wylllyotts. The suggestions which they have made for the possible usage of these premises appear to be very similar to those proposed by the joint committee, but their proposals for the restoration of the fabric are, apparently, more far reaching and would cost about half as much again as our more modest ones.

Readers of the local press will be aware that a commercial undertaking is also interested in restoring Wylllyotts and converting it into a restaurant. They have already applied for planning permission for this purpose.

Summary of the Main Recommendations from the Wylllyotts Manor Report.

- 1) Wylllyotts Manor should be reinstated and converted into a valuable social and cultural centre for Potters Bar activities which is really needed; most of the modern annexe should be pulled down and the barn cleared as a large hall for 120-150 people, while the house will serve for small meetings without basic alterations. Apart from what is strictly necessary no restoration should be attempted. The cost is realistically estimated at £22,000.
- 2) The number of organisations now active in the town suggests that Wylllyotts Manor would soon be fully used for a wide variety of purposes, and the costing based on outgoings and compared with charges levied elsewhere shows that both the house and barn could be run competitively.
- 3) The Council should set up a Trust to which Wylllyotts Manor would be leased at a peppercorn rent, thereby relieving its rate burden, and should provide the shared services of a caretaker for £800 per annum, and help with the booking staff.

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The chairman still has for sale a limited number of copies of the report on the Tilbury pottery finds - price 25p. each.