

# Newsletter

DUNSTABLE & DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

N°12

September 1999



## *From the Chairman*

It is time already to welcome you to the new session of meetings - where do the weeks and months go ? You will have received your programme card, taking us into the year 2000 and I hope that you will come to the meetings whenever you can and that you will continue to enjoy your membership. If you are a new member, then a particular welcome.

As I mentioned last year at this time, we do have a single sheet outlining our meetings as well as the official membership card. These are available for the benefit of visitors at our meetings or to give to anyone who may be interested in coming. If you know of someone, please feel free to take one, or let us know details and we will see that the person receives one.

The summer outings have now been completed and thanks are due to the outings sub-committee of Ron Frith, Hugh Garrod and Bernard Stevens, and anyone else concerned, for three very enjoyable events. Once more the sun shone upon us : who is it that has this direct line to above ?

These are the first notes, and will be the last as your Chairman, that I have written from our new abode in Blandford Forum. We are settling well, the family have said how nice it is to have us down here (they are a polite lot) and the countryside round about is absolutely gorgeous. We had many cards and well wishes from members of the Society and these were greatly appreciated. There have been some visitors here and we ourselves have been and will be back to Dunstable for commitments over the next three months.

I was asked before we moved down to Dorset whether, if there had not been a name to the house ('Holm Oak'), we would have called it 'Dunstable', in view of the long association with the town. I doubt it, I don't think somehow that 'Dunstable' suits a house name. However, we must all know or have seen dwelling places named after villages, or towns, or even countries, and all these must have meant happy memories to the owner. Maybe Dunstable is recorded somewhere, but these thoughts remind me that early in the year I was browsing through old magazines of Dunstable School. In the Christmas 1909 number under 'Old Boys News', there was the following entry : "In our last number we reported that Harold Dewar and Stanley Clarke had joined Charlie Wharton on his ranch in Western Canada.

*They have re-named it The Dunstable Ranch, in memory of their old school "*

There is no clue as to where exactly the ranch might have been in Western Canada. But might it still be there, under the same name ? Or has it disappeared like the cattle station in Australia which was named Dunstable and which Pat Reeves wrote about in our September '96 Newsletter ? Now, what an opportunity, through modern technology, or personal contacts, for some detective work to be done !

## *'Old Trades of Dunstable'*

Over the last three years, each November, we have published a book in this series. It was our intention to produce another volume this November, telling the story of Bagshawe's, very much along the lines that we presented in a recent Trades Evening on the subject. Mr. Nicholas Bagshawe, our President, would be writing the first part, myself the second. However, for various reasons this is being postponed until November next year. Whilst referring to this you will be sorry to know that Mr. Bagshawe has been very poorly, with spells in hospital, and is still undergoing treatment. I am sure you would want to join me in wishing him well, with restoration of good health as soon as possible.

Finally I would like to say how very much I have enjoyed being your Chairman since the inception of the Society in January 1992. It has been very rewarding. I would also like to record my thanks to the Officers, the Committee and to you all for your support and kind remarks over that period. We really do have a super membership. My best wishes to Hugh Garrod who will take over in October.

*Colin Bourne*

## **Dunstable North Railway Station**

We have received an appeal for photographs of the old station in High Street North from a former resident of the town who is making a model of the station. If anyone has any photographs from which photocopies could be made and sent to him would you please contact the Secretary on 01525 221963

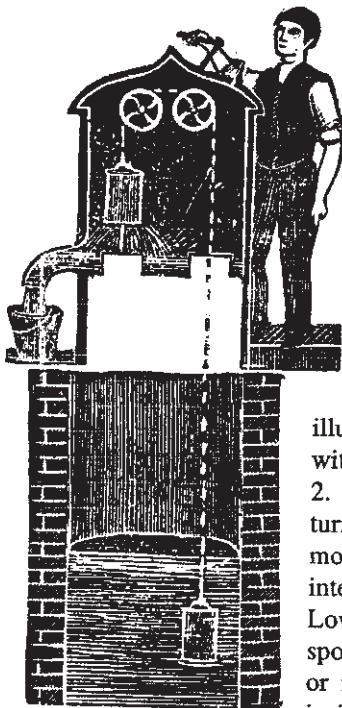
# William Scott's "Safety" Water Elevator

Our readers will remember that we 'discovered' an old water pump with the above label in Cockayne Hatley in June 1998. John Lunn reported the fact in the Society's Newsletter of September 98 (page 57) and I attempted to guess what mechanical system was used to elevate the water. At first we suspected that it was similar to a 'Yeddle pump' from the north of England, or a 'Rosary Pump' quite common in France.

The research in books and museums was totally in vain. The mystery was solved when one of the members of our Society, Christina Scott, reading the article, recognised her grand-father's pump. (Newsletter March 99, p. 65).

The way the 'elevator' works is not at all the one we first guessed. It is a completely original system and I have not found anything similar during my research. The reader should refer to the photo published on page 57, for the outside appearance of the "Water Elevator" of Cockayne Hatley. The drawing below will help to understand its general structure.

Here is, in summary, the description given in one of the first prospectuses.



"The Outside consists of an iron plate or base, which is placed on the aperture of the well. On this base plate is fixed the cylindrical cover or casing, of oval shape. A removeable dome finishes the outside appearance."

The inside mechanism is as follows: —

1. At the top a chain runs on a wheels. A bucket is attached to both ends of the chain. (The illustration shows a later model with two wheels)

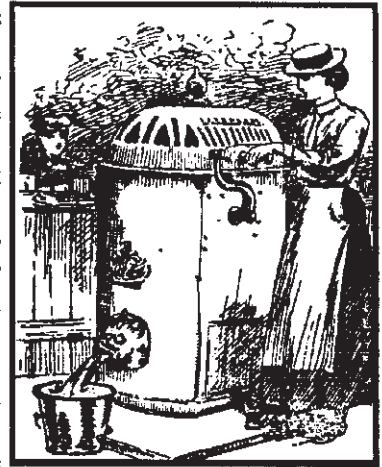
2. The wheel is activated by turning the handle. In the larger models this is done through the intermediary of a spur gear.

Lower down, at the level of the spout, there is "an annular channel or reservoir running all round the inside of the casing. It receives the

water from the buckets and empties through the spout. There are two apertures for letting the buckets pass up and down."

"The buckets are one of the patented novelties of the elevator. They have in the centre of their bottom a circular aperture closing or opening by a disc or valve." The bottom bucket, in the water, is closed. The other bucket opens when it reaches the top and empties in the reservoir, the water then rushes out through the spout.

3. A very ingenious system of ratchet and pawl reverses the gear mechanism. The handle is turned the other way round and the bucket which is on top, and now empty, is allowed to go down, while the other one, now full, is pulled up.



There were 4 models from No.0, the smallest, to No.4 the largest. The first had 2 gallon buckets (9 litres) and cost £7 10 sh. around 1907 (the price had practically doubled by the 1920s). The largest had two 8 gallon buckets (36 litres) and cost £17. The elevators are said to be able to get water from wells up to 500 ft (150 m) deep. The capacity per hour depended obviously on the strength of the operator. The approximate capacities are given as follows : the smallest which could serve a well of 2 ft in diameter and was just 3 ft high, without the cover, could deliver 360 gallons of water per hour from a 25 ft deep well – or 50 gallons per hour from a 300 ft deep well. For the largest, which was 4 ft 9 in. high for a well of diameter of 2 ft 8 in. the figures were respectively 1,440 gal. per hr. for a 25 ft. deep well and 150 gal. per hr for a 300 ft deep well.

The pumps could be fitted with a 1 inch solid brass tap to allow the drawing of the water gradually as required. The largest models used a steel wire cable rather than a chain and could be fitted with a fly wheel so that even very deep wells could be activated by children.

William Scott had certain parts of the machine made by local manufacturers. Four are listed in a little notebook as having in their possession the original patterns :

Mr F Joslins, Ashton Road, Luton  
J.H. Carters, Dunstable (Harrison Carter)  
Brown & Green Ltd, Luton  
Young – Dunstable

The rest of the parts were made in the forge at the far end of the workshop, in High Street South, by the blacksmith Mr. Fensome.

Here is a list of the "Names of Patterns. of all Sizes"

Base Plate	Channel	Cover
Bucket Bottom	Rings for Buck.Top	Rings for Bucket Valves
Bucket Valves	Bucket Bridge	Front Cross Brackets
Back Cross Brackets	Single Side Bracket	Double side Bracket
Large Cog Wheel	Small Cog Wheel	Pulley Wheel
Front Pawl	Back Pawl	Spout
Nameplate	Oil Caps	Handle
Bearing Caps	Knob	Clutch Block
Reversing Bob		

Over the years some of the patterns were improved.

The drayman from the lower Railway Station called

regularly each week to collect the items ready for despatch by rail.

William Scott was born in Manton (Wiltshire) in 1858. In 1878 he came to Dunstable for his health, as the place was renowned for its healthy and bracing air. He was an apprentice to Edward Eames, the blacksmith, of High Street North. He was a Primitive Methodist (Victoria Street) and in 1880 married Sarah Holt, from Redbourn, who was a local preacher in his church. They had five children.

In 1894, William is listed in Kelly's Directory as "*sheet metal worker & general mechanic, High Street South*". Benjamin (1882-1981) and Albert (1892-1973) are the 'Sons' in "*Scott and Sons, motor engineers, 20, 21 and 22 High Street South*", in the 1914 edition of Kelly's Directory.

William died in 1936, but his two sons continued the Scott Garage which many of us still remember, as it only closed in 1948.

Around the turn of the century William Scott made the acquaintance of Paul Rothermel, the 'inventor' of the "safety elevator". Together they established a business which had its "Office and Showroom, 104, Leadenhall Street, London E.C." The works were in Dunstable. The telegrams address was "Rothermel, London". (see notes)

In 1922 the death of Paul Rothermel – who was living at 5 Priory Road – dissolved the association and the Scotts

took over the full business. The Safety Elevators continued to be sold from Scott's Garage until 1948 when Benjamin and Albert Scott sold their business to the Ford Motor Company of Luton. They did not buy the 'Safety Water Elevator Company' however and Ben continued to sell parts from his own house, 78 Great Northern Road, as long as they lasted. The last of them was sold in September 1961.

Looking through the only two invoice books available from before the 30s. some observations can be made :

\* the two books contain 1000 invoice copies issued between July 1919 and November 1928. This represents an average of 9 bills issued each month.

\* the places where "Elevators" were sent cover the whole of England from Cornwall to Norfolk, also Wales and Ireland. There is also a dealer in Calcutta who, in 1922, ordered up to 14 elevators at one time.

\* Looking at three years at random during the period covered by the books, the following results are obtained :

An average of 25 elevators were sold each year, the most popular types are No.0 and No.1.

During the same time there are approximately 65 invoices for parts, many of them asking for more than one replacement part. The buckets are the most in demand. I presume that the valve system was one of the weak parts of the elevator.

ADVANTAGES OF THE "SAFETY" WATER ELEVATOR.

1. NO MORE OLD-FASHIONED WINDLASS.
2. NO MORE OPEN WELLS.
3. NO MORE ACCIDENTS, because it covers the well with absolute safety; no child or person can possibly fall into the well.
4. NO MORE POLLUTED WELLS. No animal, nor foreign body, no dirt, nor vegetable matter can get into the well, hence absolutely **SAFE AGAINST POLLUTION.** The cover and spout are lined with a sheet of perforated metal.
5. ANYONE CAN PLACE IT ON ANY WELL without the assistance of skilled labour within half-an-hour. All it requires is to place the Elevator over the head of the well, and to adjust the cable over the pulley wheel.
6. DEPTH IS NO OBJECT. It works with the same ease on a well 10 feet or 300 feet deep.
7. A CHILD CAN WORK IT.
8. CAN BE STOPPED AT ANY MOMENT by an automatic stop action, hence the full bucket cannot rush down again should the handle slip the hand.
9. NOT LIABLE TO GET OUT OF ORDER, because the mechanism, although ingenious, is extremely simple, and very strongly made. An enormous advantage for the Colonies and outlandish places.
10. MORE SERVICEABLE, DURABLE AND CHEAPER THAN PUMPS.
11. NO FROZEN OR BURST PIPES IN FROSTY WEATHER.



**PUMP COMBINED.**  
to a height of 60 feet.  
for this arrangement:  
all Brass Semi-rotary Pump, fixed on tripod  
removable spout pipe ... No. 3, £22; No. 4, £26 10/-.  
to depth of well and whether worked by one hand or two hands.

NOTE. "Paul Rothermel first appears in a London Trade Directory in 1883 described as an agent and commission merchant at 27 Leadenhall Street, EC. He was still at this address in 1884 but in 1885 as an agent and commission merchant and vinegar apparatus maker at 105 Leadenhall Street. From 1886 he is described simply as a commission agent and continued to occupy premises at 105 Leadenhall Street up to and including 1909.

The Safety Water Elevator Company, well sinkers, 104 Leadenhall Street, EC does not appear in directories until 1905. From 1906 the company was described as pump makers and is last

listed at this address in 1908. Both 104 and 105 Leadenhall Street always appear to have been in multi-occupation during this period. (This information was received from the Guildhall Library enquiry service in London.)

The design of the Water Elevator uses the design of "Jonet's Patent Well Gear". It looks as if Jonet was French and possibly an acquaintance of Paul Leathermel, who was married to a French woman. The tradition is that he was the designer of the pump but his previous occupations seem rather to indicate that he was a shrewd agent who played a key role in the marketing of William Scott's pump at least at the beginning around 1905.

I am grateful to Miss Christina Scott who helped me with her memories and allowed me to use documents from her grandfather's archives. These will be soon deposited in the Bedfordshire Record Office.

Also to Valerie Hart from the Guildhall library for researching for me in the old London Trade Directories.

A photo of the company stand at an exhibition in London c.1906 can be seen on page 73.

Omer Roucoux

# The Meteorological Office in Dunstable during WW2

Following Martin Stubbs' talk to the society about the Met. Office in Dunstable we asked Brian Audric for his recollections of working here. This article is based on his notes and memories. He started the IDA unit in Dunstable in October 1940 and left Dunstable and the Met Office in the autumn of 1947. Brian says that the ETA in Dunstable was a happy place to work, with a very friendly and lively atmosphere ; for the people who worked here the time never dragged, encouraged as they were by the knowledge of the usefulness of the IDA unit in the war effort.

I am very grateful to him for providing me with his text and authorising me to use and quote long extracts from it.

Omer Roucoux

## The Central Forecast Office (CFO)

In 1938 plans were made that in event of war breaking out the communication centre for the forecasting service should be in a provincial location. Indeed heavy raids on the capital were anticipated and the CFO from Kingsway, London, was to be moved to Dunstable. The site was chosen mainly because it was in a convenient position relative to the Post Office land lines, not too far from London or from the RAF Communications Centre at Leighton Buzzard, nor from Station X at Bletchley Park. Also the conditions for wireless reception were good because of the high ground nearby, and the housing of the personnel was quite easy in this small town

In September 1939 the new office accommodation had not yet been completed and the CFO was evacuated to Birmingham. The move to Dunstable was completed in February 1940. The office was code named ETA (from the name of a Greek letter), although it was usually known simply as 'Dunstable'.

The office site was on the western edge of the town – the site covered exactly by the small estate at the entrance of Weatherby from Drovers Way today : Norman Way, Redfield, Cookfield and Bunhill Close. The area was surrounded by a high chain link fence topped by barbed wire. The security was assured by civilian Air Ministry police. At first they wore their own clothes with an official armband and were armed with pickaxe handles, later they were provided with proper uniforms and service revolvers. They controlled the gates and patrolled the grounds by day and night.

The site was camouflaged by installing steel uprights which carried cables starting at ground level at the site perimeter and carried up and over the buildings. Wire netting containing lead turnings overlaid the cables and this was sprayed with a dull camouflage paint. It did not look very camouflaged from the ground and a pilot friend of a staff member told her that he had flown over her office "it's the camouflaged hill near the Downs, we know it well!" In his book, "25 years of Dunstable, 1952-1977", Bruce Turvey says that during the war several attempts

were made to bomb the station and the German planes used to drop silver strips of paper over the pylons to upset the radio waves. One bomb was actually dropped opposite the station in Totternhoe Road, between two bungalows, but, to the relief of all the residents remained unexploded. To everyone's relief at the end of the War, the camouflage was removed together with the blast walls surrounding the H-Block.

One of the main sections of the main building was entirely devoted to operations and the other was largely administrative. The operation building contained a large teleprinter room which received all the weather reports from the outstations and from which the collected reports were issued to all stations, a repair workshop and a PBX . Next door was the communication room where the editing was performed and where the draughtswomen, who prepared the Daily Weather Report, worked. The final section of the operation area was divided into the wireless transmission (WT) room, which received most of the meteorological radio transmission from abroad (staffed by RAF and civilian operators), and the Forecast Room where the Aviation and Senior forecasters worked. The receiving aerials for the WT Room were located in a field some distance away from the main site.

In 1942 an experimental long range forecasting unit was established. The staff were mostly girl assistants, civilian and WAAFs (Women's Auxiliary Air Force), who used simple mechanical adding machines to work out the mathematics involved. One of the supervisors was Miss Jarman. Unfortunately these long range forecasts were not very successful. The mathematical theory at the base may well have been correct but until very powerful computers became available it was not possible to incorporate all the data required. The unit was eventually closed down and the staff dispersed to other duties.

Only quite late in the War regular daily information started, being made with all the available modern instruments to record the local weather.

The officers were the senior forecaster Dight, and Roberts, an academic mathematician temporarily at CFO on research work.

## Life in Dunstable.

During wartime Dunstable was quite a pleasant place to be. It proved to be a 'safe haven' and emerged unscathed in 1945. There was a good selection of shops, pubs, a cinema and a public library. Luton had a greater range of shops and several cinemas. There was a frequent bus service to Luton and a less frequent service from our two railway stations to Luton and to Leighton Buzzard. The town provided other amusements such as horse riding on the Downs, an open air swimming pool and very pleasant country towards Tring and Aylesbury where many cycle rides could be enjoyed.

The approach to the Office from the town was through a

council housing estate via Worthington Road. In the summer of 1940 the yellow flowered charlock grew wherever the ground had been disturbed, showing very clearly where the drains, water and other services had been laid. After the first year the weeds did not reappear. Before the war the farmland around Dunstable was used mostly for grazing as the soil was fairly shallow over chalk. During the War much of the farmland went over to grain production.

### Staff

Before WW2 meteorology in the UK was a male preserve and this was still the case in 1940 but a change was on the way. The Air Ministry had recruited a considerable number of male university graduates (salary £300 pa). Dunstable had several working as assistants alongside temporary and established Technical Assistants. As the time passed the majority of them, who trained as forecasters to serve RAF airfields, were replaced by civilian girls and later by both civilians and WAAF's.

Male staff continued to provide all the forecasters, the communication supervisors and some specialised jobs. There were some young men who came as assistants but women filled most of the chairs. Up to the autumn of 1947, there were no women forecasters.

The Head of branch was E.G. Bilham, a climatologist who was not seen very often outside his office. A quiet man in general, he could be very firm with those at Headquarters who tried to interfere. He lived in a nearby village and was known in consequence as the 'Squire of Eaton Bray'.

The most senior forecaster, C.K.M. Douglas, was totally dedicated to the study of weather and had an extensive memory of past weather situations. His austere and somewhat distant manner was probably due partly to shyness and partly to injuries sustained whilst flying in the 1914-18 war. He was however a very pleasant man and when off duty could tell stories about himself and his misadventures. Messrs Dodds, Dight, Forsdyke and Harding were also some of the Senior Forecasters. The Senior Forecaster on night duty was on call but slept in the Senior forecaster's bedroom between midnight and about 0500 when he was woken up by the Aviation Forecaster with a cup of tea.

There were several foreign staff. Berson was a Pole educated in Sweden who said in 1940 that if the Germans invaded Britain he would stay in the office because if he went outside he might be considered as a Fifth Columnist, as during the German invasion of Poland he had difficulties because he spoke Polish with a Swedish accent. There were several Norwegians. Hans Mukabye had been in charge of communication in the Norwegian Met Office, he had also worked for the resistance after the German invasion of Norway. When his cover was blown he had escaped to England via Sweden. Professor Sverre Petterssen, another Norwegian resident in the USA,

came to England and recruited Norwegians from from Norway to join him. One of these was Captain Christiansen who was helped by the Resistance to get to England via Sweden. There were others too, including Per Sundt of Bergen who escaped from Norway by boat to the Shetlands and joined the Norwegian Air Force, was trained in meteorology and came to Dunstable. Sundt and Christiansen together with Robert Ratcliffe formed part of the Upper Air Unit under Petterssen.

The head of the Teleprinter Room was Charlie Muggeridge, seconded from the Post Office Telegraph Engineers before the war to re-organise the Met Office teleprinter service. He could do anything necessary from repairs to machines to typing faster and more accurately than anyone else, even faster than the broadcasting machines could cope with.

Service motor cycle dispatch riders provided a daily service, once or twice a day to the London HQ and three or four times a day to Station X for the IDA Unit. They provided an excellent service in all weathers and all seasons.

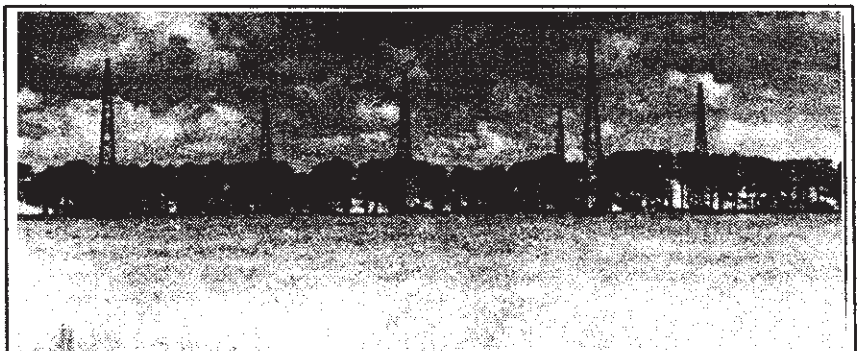
The riders were armed with service revolvers which they handed in to the communication supervisors to be locked up safely when they went off duty. One supervisor took a revolver from its holster before locking it up and pulled the trigger and blew a hole in the Communication Room floor. The guns were carried with one chamber empty in case the trigger was accidentally pulled. Tragically, one rider was showing off to some girls in the WT Room, he put his gun to his head and pulled the trigger. He died later in hospital.

Sergeant Stroud was one of the most useful and knowledgeable members of the WT staff. He had been in the RAF as a radio operator and he joined the Air Ministry radio staff in Kingsway at the end of his pre-war service. He was recalled to the RAF in 1939. He was an excellent operator and found all sorts of German local transmissions which were most valuable to the IDA unit.

The RAF personnel were under the command of Squadron Leader Goodfellow. All the RAF personnel had specialist trades, there was little parade ground stuff. Pay parades and FFI's (Free From Infection) were specially memorable. The Met RAF staff came under the same controls as the civilian staff and there was no difference at work. Some WAAF's stayed on in the Met Office as civilians when demobbed.

The Station moved to Bracknell, Berks, in July 1956. The Drovers Way site was sold to George Wimpey for £125,000.

*The picture below was taken by Bruce Turvey in 1952 and was published in his book "25 Years of Dunstable, 1952-1977". It is reproduced here by kind permission of the author.*

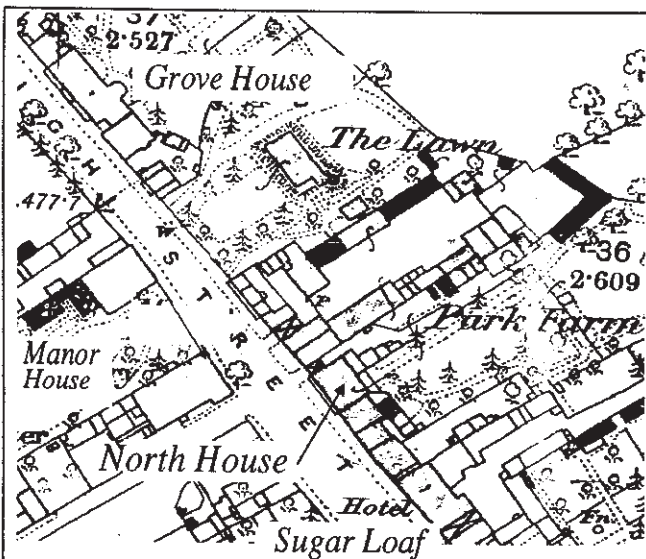


# The Mystery of the Mansion House

It was a chance discovery of a reference to Marshe Dickinson's Mansion House that started me on this trail. In the Manor Court records of Dunstable it was recorded that in 1743 two properties in North Street had been bought by Marshe Dickinson "who had pulled down all the said buildings for an opening to his Mansion House there". But where was the Mansion House? Nobody seemed to have heard of it, let alone know where it was.

Marshe Dickinson was a man of means, descended, on his mother's side, from the family of Marshes, Carts, Chews and Ashtons who had endowed so many charities in the town. He himself had been born in London, the son of a master grocer who came originally from Yorkshire. John Dickinson had been admitted to the Grocers' Company after a seven year apprenticeship and his son Marshe was admitted "by patrimony" in 1729. Marshe Dickinson went on to become Master of the Grocers' Company, Alderman of Queenhithe Ward, a Lord Mayor of London and M.P. for Brackley, Northamptonshire. On his death in 1765 he left all his estate to his son, John Marshe Dickinson, having given his daughter her portion on the occasion of her marriage. But his will gave no details of his estate whatsoever.

So where was his *Mansion House*? One obvious candidate was what was known as *the Manor House*, demolished in 1962 to make way for a new post office. It was known to have been quite a luxurious residence when it was put up for auction in 1843, but apart from the fact that it was owned and occupied by the Burr family (the brewers) prior to that, nothing of its earlier history could be discovered.



*Mansion House also called North House  
in High Street North in 1880*

Another suggestion was *Grove House*. But since Thomas Bagshawe had found evidence showing that an inn called the Duke of Bedford's Arms "must have stood more or less on or near the site of Grove House" in the 1750s, at which time Marshe Dickinson's Mansion House was already in existence, this could not be the answer.

There was only one other clue. In one of the travel books becoming popular in the late 18th century was a note that "Mr. Dickinson's mansion-house here is now the property of ... Miller, Esq., Senior." It was obviously regarded as a house of some importance.

As the BBC's House Detectives say, it was time to go to the Archives and Records Office. And there, after a few false starts, the story began to emerge. From some old and dusty deeds among the deposits from the solicitors Benning, Hoare & Drew it was possible to trace the history of the Mansion House.

It came as something of a surprise to find that within five years of his father's death John Marshe Dickinson was in debt to the tune of £34,000, an enormous sum of money in those days. His creditors met together and he had to agree to sell a number of his assets to their trustees, a Mr. Anthony Pye and Mr. Lawrence Holker, of London. Among the properties was the Mansion House. Some five years later these gentlemen sold it on to a buyer in Staffordshire, and he in turn sold it to John Miller of Dunstable, the man mentioned in the travel book. With the house went over twenty-one acres of land, including a field of seven acres called Parkfield. (Could this be the origin of Dunstable Park?)

John Miller owned a great deal of property and land in the town, but actually chose to go and live in the Mansion House. After his death, in 1792, it was left to his son, another John Miller, who let it to tenants for a few years, but in 1802 sold it to the Rev. William Mead. There are various deeds existing covering the next 30 years, though the record is incomplete, and there seem to have been several changes of ownership and several mortgages were involved. Finally, in 1829, the house was bought by Thomas Burr, the brewer, though he probably never lived there.

There were, however, several interesting changes in the deeds over this period. The first was that the amount of land sold with the house was reduced from just over twenty-one acres to two. (In the light of later discoveries it seems likely that the other nineteen acres became part of *Park Farm*.) The second was that at the same time all the deeds started to mention the Bailiff's House, "on the north side of the Gateway leading into the Yard of the said Capital Messuage", as being part of the property, and this description turned out to be a significant phrase which was to



North House, Mr. Gutteridge's home for many years.

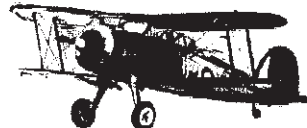
In the 18th century, it was known as Marshe Dickinson's Mansion House.

reappear in every document throughout the next century. Lastly, the name or title of the Mansion House gradually disappeared. The one thing none of the documents did was to say where the house actually was, not even mentioning on which side of the High Street it stood.

By a lucky coincidence, at about the same time that I first came across a mention of the Bailiff's House, Vivienne Evans also came across an entirely different and much later reference to it. This identified it as being by then the tailor's shop owned by Mr. Anderson, in High Street North, which people living here before 1960 still remembered as being on the corner of what is now Queensway. Here at last was a definite clue as to the whereabouts of the Mansion House, pointing to an area which was re-developed in the late fifties and early sixties.

**North House.** It was next to what is now Peacock's shop (previously the Co-op), on the north side, and would actually have stood where there is now the road known as Queensway. The end of its long garden, described as having "very beautiful lawns and grounds", would have been approximately in line with Kingscroft Avenue.

Marshe Dickinson's original grounds, of course, would have included the land on which the Queensway Hall stands at the moment. I wonder which side he would have taken in the controversy today.



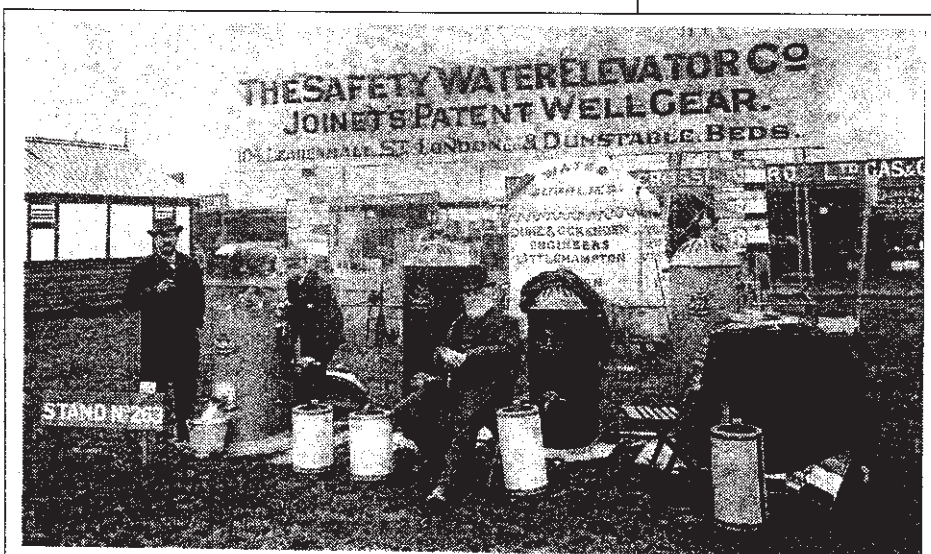
Joan Curran

## Wartime Bedfordshire

The Bedfordshire Local History Association has arranged an afternoon on the subject of Wartime Bedfordshire, to be held at Clapham Village Hall at 2.15 pm on Saturday, 16th October. Martin Lawrence will give an overall picture of the impact of the war on the county, Stephen Coleman will describe the wartime defences constructed in the area and Martin Deacon will tell us about the extensive collection of documents relating to the war years that still exists in the archive collection.

*Admission is free.*

It will also be possible to arrange a visit to Bedfordshire's best surviving (derelict) airfield at Twinwoods, near Clapham, in the morning. Please let the secretary know if you are interested.



The stand of *The Safety Water Elevator Company*, probably at White City around 1906. The boy in the middle is Ben Scott, the man on the left could be Paul Rothermel.

## EVENT

The Duxford Imperial War Museum is holding a 'Special Interest Day' on Saturday, 25th September, devoted to the subject of the Cold War. Cost is £12 for senior citizens (liquid refreshments provided!) Further information from the Museum on 01223 835000.

## CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations are due to Archives and Records Office at Bedford for being awarded a Charter Mark for the third time. Charter Marks are only awarded for three years at a time - after that the organisation has to make another application and be reappraised for it to be awarded again. The Archives and Records Office is one of a select group of organisations that has actually been given the award three times. If you get Anglia Television in your area you may have seen the County Archivist and the Office on the television when the awards were announced recently.

Those of you who have occasion to visit the Office from time to time will also be pleased to know that it now stays open throughout the lunch hour every day.

## TREASURES AT THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Can you imagine what a collection of 100 miles of records looks like? That is what the Public Record Office houses in its new home at Kew. Since it moved out of its rather gloomy and forbidding old home in Chancery Lane the PRO has produced a list of a whole range of guides to all the kinds of records it keeps, many of them aimed at helping family historians to trace their ancestors. There is a great deal of other material there, of course, such as records from World War 1, the official records of the Titanic, details of SOE operations in the war, guides to records of personnel in the armed forces, original papers from the trial of Oscar Wilde, guides to tracing old wills and heaps more.

Indexing such a massive collection is a monumental task, so it is exciting to find that if you are on the internet and can visit the PRO website, <[www.pro.gov.uk](http://www.pro.gov.uk)>, you will find over 480 items listed referring to Dunstable, ranging from records of disputes between the Prior and the townsfolk to details of the establishment of the Met. Office here at the outbreak of World War 2.

A list of books published by the PRO is also on the internet, but if you don't have access to it, or you don't want to know about computers, we have received a very attractive, old-fashioned printed catalogue listing them. The catalogue is available from me and more copies can be obtained if required. If you are interested in buying any of the books, let me know.

Joan Curran

## BOOKS

Two new books on Dunstable will be published by the Book Castle this autumn

### **STREETS AHEAD**

*The Origin of Dunstable's Street Names*  
by Richard Walden

Hardback £25.00 — Paperback £14.99

The stories behind the naming of Dunstable's Streets reveals fascinating facts about the town's development. Containing 300 pages, profusely illustrated with 600 modern and archive photographs. A mass of information which reveals the truth behind all these mysterious or unrecognised Street Names.

### **PROUD HERITAGE**

*A brief History of Dunstable — 1000-2000 AD*  
by Vivienne Evans

Hardback £10.00

Devoting a chapter to each of the ten centuries of the millennium, this book first sets the national and county scene in order to make more comprehensible the purely Dunstable events

The next book to be published by the  
Bedfordshire Historical Record Society is  
**STRAWOPOLIS**

*Luton Transformed 1840 - 1876*

by Stephen Bunker

320 pp. — Paperback £15.00

Richard Cobden described it as 'the Manchester of Bedfordshire', and Sir Robert Peel condescendingly dismissed it as a place whose houses were 'built of straw'. This study traces how 'Strawopolis', to give Luton a 19th century designation, experienced a social and economic transformation. It also details the collapse of the institutions associated with the old market town and considers the new elements which replaced them.

*Strawopolis* provides an understanding of the forces which made Luton the country's principal straw hat manufacturing town and which created the antecedents for its 20th century growth as an engineering centre.

## WEA COURSES

- \* *Dunstable with the Priory, 15th & 16th c.* Tutor : Vivienne Evans. Commencing 28.9.99 in Salvation Army Community Centre.
- \* *From Wenlock Edge to Aldeburgh Shore : 20th c. British Music*. David Huckvale. Commencing 29.9.99, in Methodist Church Hall.
- \* *The Bedfordshire Country House : 1660-1914.* Tutor : James Collett-White. Commencing 30.9.99 in 5 Winfield Street.

All the courses start at 10 a.m. and last for 10 weeks.

Fees £23.00.

Concessions £19.50 and £17.00 (Free to the unwaged)

Enrolment at the venue on the 1st or 2nd meeting.

Telephone enquiries to the Branch Secretary :

Telephone 01582 591933