

# Newsletter

Dunstable & District  
Local history Society

N° 17

March 2002



## *The Chairman's Report*

The major innovation since the last newsletter is the move from the Methodist School Hall to the Salvation Army venue and the change of date from the second Tuesday of the month to the first Monday. When we reconvened in September, after our summer outings, attendance was down on last year. I think this was because many people were still away on holiday. We filled the Hall for our October meeting and had to fold back the partition in November to get everyone in.

We experienced some problems initially with the sound system and the projection of slides. We have now worked out where to site the projector so that we can use the large screen and we have decided to insist that all our speakers use a neck mike, no matter how loud a voice they have. The Salvation Army are about to overhaul the sound system and make it 'idiot-proof', their words not mine. It should make it even easier to hear and enjoy our speakers. Many members have commented on how much more comfortable the seats are in our new venue and that they appreciate the difference. It is certainly more convenient, now that we don't have to put all the chairs out before-hand and stack them again afterwards.

Our speaker in September was Tony Rook, who gave us a very entertaining and informative talk called '*My Life In Ruins.*' He is a building technologist and a professional archaeologist and he told us about his work in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. In October we welcomed Maureen Hemming. She works as a guide at *Woburn Abbey* and showed us a wonderful selection of slides. She told us something of the history of the Abbey and the treasures it contains.

Our next speaker was our old friend Omer Roucoux, whose theme was '*1500 Years of Watling Street.*' He had a marvellous collection of slides to guide us through the history and development of our road, from Roman times to the present day.

For our Christmas social, at the Methodist Hall, we

were entertained by our old friends The Riseley Singers. They sang a variety of seasonal items, interlaced with jokes and amusing stories. Our first speaker of the New Year was John Woolley. He had given us a wonderful talk a few years ago about '*The Great Train Robbery*' and so we eagerly looked forward to his second visit. We were not disappointed for he was, again, in good form. His talk was entitled '*The Story Of The Police*' and showed how the force had developed from the needs of society. He clearly illustrated why it evolved in the way that it did. His informative and lively delivery was punctuated by humorous observations.

Our Trades Evening, on 4<sup>th</sup> February, took for its subject the hat trade in Dunstable. During the first part of the evening, Vivienne Evans gave us a marvellous talk about the rise and fall of hat and bonnet making in our town. She told us of the families and characters who were involved in this trade. The second part was an illustrated talk by Joan Curran on the locations of the various factories. She showed, with the help of Omer Roucoux, slides of the buildings currently on these sites. The evening was well attended and thoroughly appreciated by all who were present.

I would like to thank all of the committee for the sterling work they do on your behalf and to welcome Gordon Ivanson as our vice-chairman. I would also like to thank Tony Ward for sending accounts of our meetings to the *Dunstable Gazette*. My thanks also go to those of you who bravely agree to give the vote of thanks. It can be a nerve-racking experience and I am very grateful.

There is no change in the condition of our friend and vice-president, John Lunn, except that he is a little more frail. Those of us who go to see him in Capwell Grange Nursing Home will be pleased to keep you informed on his condition.  
*Hugh Garrod*

Articles published in the Newsletter cannot be reproduced without permission

## Dunstable Mechanics Institute - David Lindsey

The article in the 'Newsletter' of September 1998 (No 10, page 56) about Dunstable's Mechanics Institute posed the question as to where it might have held its meetings, and a request was made for information. The article also explained that Mechanics Institutes were mostly established between 1820 and 1860 "for the education of manual workers" and were to "hold public lectures about applied sciences and to run courses in various skills". Many of the Institutes were short lived but some were taken over by those who were not mechanics but who had money, leisure and a desire to hear lectures, and by those who wished to encourage the "moral and intellectual improvement of the Working Classes".

Whilst searching through old copies of the 'Dunstable Chronicle' for items on the town's hat trade, Rita Swift came across an account of the inaugural meeting of the Mechanics Institute on 4 November 1858. From this first lead, the Institute's fortunes have been followed from reports in the 'Dunstable Chronicle' and in the 'Dunstable Borough Gazette' through to July 1871 after when regular reports of the meetings cease to appear.

The newspaper reports are quoted at length for, apart from giving full accounts of the meetings and details of the people involved, they also give a fascinating insight to the times and manners of the mid 19th century, for example the references to election fervour and the straw trade. The style of reporting is delightfully polite but nonetheless direct. In quoting from the reports, the subject matter of the meetings is given in italics although this was not done in the originals.

It is interesting to read the report of the inaugural meeting in the 'Chronicle' for Saturday, 6 November 1858: "MECHANICS INSTITUTE, EDWARD STREET - The opening of the above Institute took place on Thursday evening under the happiest auspices. H. Brandreth, Esq., of Houghton House, took the chair. We noticed among the company which filled the building Messrs. Joseph Osborn,

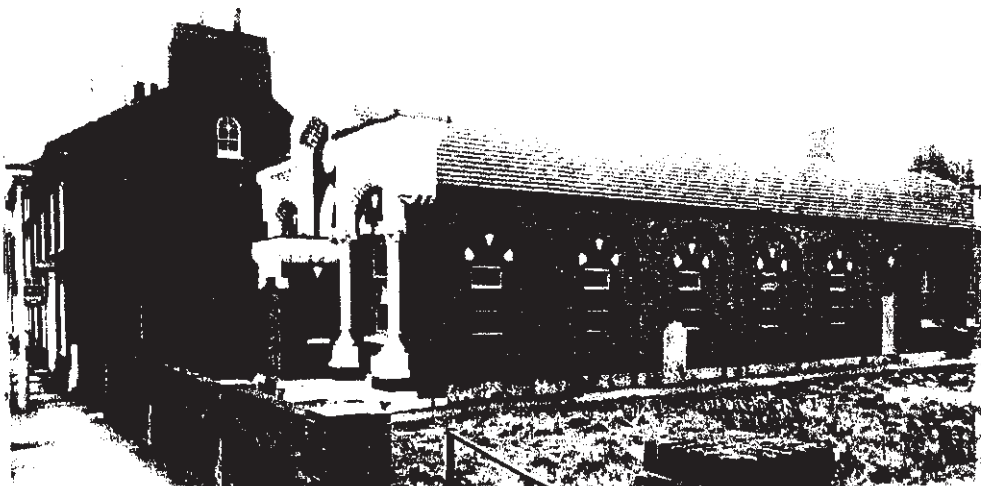
J.Farr, W.Elliott and E.Lockhart, with many other respectable inhabitants of Dunstable. About 100 members we understand have already taken their quarterly tickets at 1s.6d. each, payable in advance; and judging from the interest evinced during the evening, the committee have much to encourage and support them ..."

In a follow-up report a week later (13 November), the 'Chronicle' gives a more detailed account of this meeting which agreed the Rules and heard long speeches in support from several members. The 'Chronicle' begins its report thus - "The want of such an Institution has long been felt in Dunstable, and on a few friends headed by our respected postmaster, Mr. T.C.Johnson making known their views to Mr. Osborn, that gentleman in the kindest manner possible placed at their disposal free of all charge whatever, a little freehold of his in Edward Street which adjoins the Tabernacle". This must have been the School Hall built in 1856 which is now the United Reformed Church. The Tabernacle (the Congregational Chapel) was demolished and the site is today occupied by the Osborn House flats.

When the first real meeting took place is a puzzle. On 20 November the 'Chronicle' reported that the Institute had 123 members, "a source of great satisfaction to its promoters to see the room so well attended each evening" implying that several meetings had already taken place, but there is no report of any meeting until 17 December 1858, full details of which are given in the 'Chronicle' for 25 December (yes - a paper on Christmas Day!). It records that on "the 17th instant, the Rev. Samuel Cowdy, of Leighton Buzzard, delivered a lecture on '*Character*' to a closely packed audience" then follows a detailed résumé of the lecture. At the conclusion, J.Osborn, Esq. said that it "gave him very great pleasure to see so large and respectable an audience as the one assembled, and trusted that the Institute which had just been founded, would meet with encouragement and prosper".

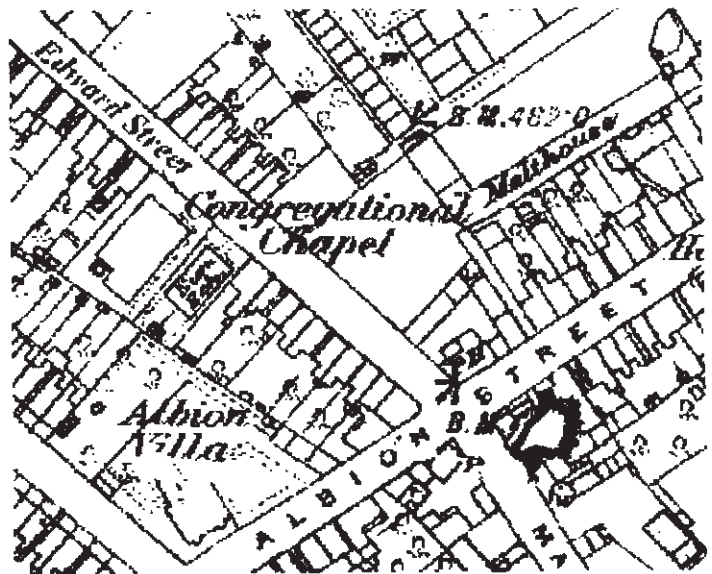
At the next reported meeting on 27 December 1858 ('Chronicle' 1 January 1859) "the third lecture" was delivered by the Rev. T. Hands of Luton. "Notwithstanding the very unfavourable state of the weather, the attendance was of a most cheering character". The subject was '*Heroism in Private Life*', the speaker illustrating his theme by reference to Bernard Palissy (a French potter), George Stephenson ("the celebrated engineer") and Dr. Kitto (founder of the circulating library). If this was the third meeting, the second seems not to have been reported.

A fortnight later (13 January, 'Chronicle' 15 January 1859 -



The School Hall next to the Tabernacle was built in 1856. It was first known as Osborne Hall in memory of Mr Joseph Osborn the founder member. It is now the United Reformed Church, situated on the west side of Edward Street.  
The Congregational Church was situated in the space left in the foreground after its demolition

no report of the 6 January meeting assuming there was one) the subject was *'The Creation'* given by the Rev. G. Shaw, B.A., curate of Dunstable. The attendance "was larger than on any previous occasion; and the lecture was listened to with the most marked attention". Of interest at this meeting is that there was a proposal that the Rev. F. Hose should preside, who, having taken the chair and after praising Mr. Johnson and Mr. Osborn for their "energetic exertions" in promoting the Institute, continued "He was happy to say that at the present day the clergy & ministers of other religious bodies could take part in Mechanics Institutes" He went on to explain that initially there had been hostility from the promoters to the introduction of any religious element. Although it was not the the intention of these institutions to make religious instruction a prominent feature, "it was very important that no hostility should exist". From this it would seem that behind the scenes there had been a serious debate as to whether the Institute should be purely secular or not.



from the 1880 O. S. map to the scale of 208.33 Feet to One Inch

The next meeting on 20 January ('Chronicle' 22 January 1859) was somewhat different in that it was given by a young working man, Mr. J.P. Dowling, of Dunstable, on *'Chemistry with Experiments'*. The report continues "The attendance was good, and the members, generally speaking, appeared interested. The lecture passed off satisfactorily, when we take into consideration that this was his maiden speech, and we hope the time is not far distant, when Mr. D. will again appear before members, and that other young men may be induced to follow his example". With this obvious cool reception, one doubts whether Mr. D. or others would be tempted to oblige.

"On Thursday evening January 27th" so reports the 'Chronicle' 29 January, "a lecture was delivered by the Rev. S. Cowdy of Leighton on the *'Life and Times of Lady Rachael Russell'*... The attendance was more numerous than on any occasion", from which we can gather that the Institute was going from strength to strength.

Two lectures were scheduled on consecutive evenings, 24 and 25 February (no lectures reported between these and that on 27 January) "by that talented orator, Mr. J. De Fraine Esq." The first was entitled *'On Funny Folks'* and the second *'Our Young Men and Women'*. The report on the first ('Chronicle' 26 February) comments that the lecture was delivered to "a very numerous and respectable audience. The fair sex were present in a much larger proportion than we ever remember to have seen on any similar occasion". It must have been quite a lecture, "the style... was humorous yet earnest" and touched upon "foppishness in young men, affection in young women, the moral influence of young women on the opposite sex, the evils of gossiping and talebearing" all of which "elicited great appreciation". There is no report of the second lecture despite Mr. De Fraine having 'advertised' it at the end of the first. He seems to have muddled up the subject matter of the two lectures!

Thereafter subsequent lectures covered *'Dr. Livingstone'* (3 March, 'Chronicle' 5 March) by Mr. Gustavus Jordan, junr. of Luton, when the "attendance was good but not so full as

on some previous occasions"; *'The Life and Times of John Milton'* (10 March, 'Chronicle' 12 March) by Mr. George Caruthers of Bedford, formerly of Dunstable - "The audience was not so large as could be desired, many being prevented from attending owing to the pressing engagements of the straw trade, at this season of the year.", and *'The History, not the Mystery of Wood Engraving'* (31 March). Again the 'Chronicle' comments (2 April) on the smallness of the audience.

As can be seen, just after six months, attendance numbers appear to be falling, and in its 9 April edition the 'Chronicle' felt obliged to write: "MECHANICS INSTITUTE - It is to be deeply deplored that of late the various lectures connected with this institute should be so thinly attended. We refer especially to the one delivered on Thursday last, by a member on a most interesting subject, *'The Laws of the Universe'*. By some it has been surmised that the charge of admission formed the barrier. To obviate this, on the present occasion admittance was free; but the result was even less favourable than on former occasions". At the conclusion of the discussion, Mr. Farr "earnestly hoped that an institute like the one they were assembled in, - so eminently calculated to lead the young men of the town to higher thoughts and nobler exercises of the mind, instead of the sensual, selfish and grovelling - would continue to flourish." These comments would seem to confirm the Institute's objectives were to 'encourage the moral and intellectual improvement of the Working Classes'.

However things seemed to improve for the next lecture on Thursday 14 April ('Chronicle' 16 April) on *'The Microscope and the Wonders It Reveals'* given "gratuitously" by the Messrs. Burtons, of Newman Street, Oxford Street, London. Despite the appalling weather conditions "many more assembled than could possibly have been expected". At the close of the lecture, the audience was invited to use the microscope "which kept them to a somewhat late hour."

The improvement did not last long for the next meeting on Wednesday 21 April in the Wesleyan schoolroom was poorly

attended. The 'Chronicle' reports (23 April) ".... the Rev. Richard Bell, of Hull, kindly consented to deliver a lecture on *The Mind, Its Existence and the Sources of Its Improvement and Delight*'. The 'Chronicle' continues: "On its first announcement a large gathering was contemplated; but unfortunately, what with the din and confusion created by the Liberal and Conservative candidates addressing their various constituents, the one in the Market Place, and the other at the Temperance Hall, a limited number only came to hear this highly-instructive lecture..." At the close of the meeting, the Doxology " was sung with that energy and spirit that made the heart thrill with delight."

This is the last report of the Institute's meetings in the 'Dunstable Chronicle' up to the edition of 30 July 1859, the last copy of which is available for inspection. The final edition of the 'Chronicle' was published in July 1860. However, copies of the 'Dunstable Borough Gazette', founded in 1865 by Daniel Tibbett, become available from the edition published on Saturday 17 July 1869. No reports are carried of any Institute meetings until 18 September 1869 when it announces the annual general meeting of the 'Dunstable Institute' (note - not the Mechanics Institute) on Tuesday 21 September in the Town Hall.

The report the following week (25 September) reads : "The Institute. A general meeting of members was convened on Tuesday evening last for the purpose of electing officers and making other preliminary arrangements for the session which will commence on Tuesday October 5th. An intelligent and businesslike committee was elected; and we, therefore, have no doubt that the society will continue to maintain the high standing which it occupied in the public mind last year, both for instruction and entertainments. A programme of the first quarter's proceedings will be issued in a few days." The meeting on October 5th on *The Parliamentary Session of 1869* was postponed to Friday the 8th, but there is no report of it.

It is reasonable to assume, but further enquiry might be beneficial, that the Dunstable Institute is the same society as the Mechanics Institute despite the days and venues of the meetings and the personalia involved having all changed. We know that much can alter in a society in 10 years. However, there was also a change in style. Instead of a lecture by a well known speaker, sometimes followed by a short discussion, the form of the meetings was for members to present essays which were discussed at length. For example, on Tuesday 19 October 1869 ('Gazette' 23 October), two papers were presented. The first "was read by Mr Hespivadoux on *The Present Social Position of Women*' which was listened to with great interest and marks of approbation" There was an active debate. This was followed by Mr Rackam "who read a paper on *Stonehenge*' the essayist having recently visited those remarkable remains of antiquity." Mr Rackam "did not agree with the generally received opinion as to its having been erected by the Druids". Again a lively debate ensued.

The next meeting on 26 October was billed as a debate led by Mr Hambling on *Were the Crusades Advantageous to Our Civilisation?* and other papers". Sadly the meeting

was not reported. This was followed (2 November) by *Natural and Experimental Philosophy* led by Mr Sinkwell, and other papers; (16 November) *The Study and Practice of Elocution* and a debate *Which has been the Greater Scourge of Europe - Infidelity or Popery?* Again there are no accounts of these what would seem to be interesting debates; the last one must have been really fascinating.

Since the 'Borough Gazette' did not mention any of the Institute's meetings after that on 23 November 1869, apart from one isolated reference on the 2 April 1870 to a debate on *Is the System of Voting by Ballot Desirable?* (no report), it was decided not to persist with further research beyond January 1872. Sufficient information about the Dunstable Mechanics Institute has nonetheless been elicited to answer most of the questions asked.

## CONCLUSIONS

- The Institute was founded on Thursday 4 November 1858.
- Initially it met in the school hall, Mr J.Osborn's "little freehold in Edward Street" (now the United Reformed Church), and later in the Wesleyan Church Hall and the Town Hall.
- The founding fathers appear to have been Messrs Joseph Osborn, J. Farr, E. Lockhart, E.F. Gravestock and T.C. Johnson ("our respected postmaster") to whom H.Brandreth Esq. of Houghton House lent his able support.
- Initially the membership fee was 1s 6d per quarter "payable in advance".
- Within a fortnight the membership had reached 123, apparently mostly men, although ladies were reported attending meetings, so they too may well have been members.
- The subjects of the lectures, papers, essays and debates varied considerably, probably being dependent on the speakers invited. The inclusion of religious subjects was a source of discussion, but this might have been at 'national level'. It is interesting to note that many of the speakers were, in fact, clergymen.
- It is clear from what Mr.Farr said at the meeting on 7 April 1859 that the purpose of the Institute was "to lead young men of the town to higher thoughts and nobler exercises of the mind", in other words, to 'encourage the moral and intellectual improvement of the working classes', one of the original objectives of Mechanics Institutes. Mr.Farr's comments seem also to indicate that the Institute was meant for young men only, and not ladies.
- Whilst the meetings were well attended in the early days, within six months numbers were falling.
- Recorded meetings continued until November 1868 after when, with one exception (31 March 1870), the 'Gazette' seems to have decided that they were not sufficiently news worthy to warrant reporting.
- By 1872 however, things would appear to have tailed off, although meetings may have continued afterwards, but it is not safe to assume this without further evidence.

*This then is the rise and decline of the Dunstable Mechanics Institute, although when it actually ceased to function has not yet been determined. If any members come across any further information, the Editor would be pleased to hear.*

# Dunstable Borough Gazette,

March 1902

## Dunstable Borough Sessions

This (Wednesday) Morning  
Before Mr. G. Sinkwell, (in the chair) Mr. A.G. Inwards, Mr. J. Gilham and Mr. R. Barton.

### NOT QUITE HOOLIGANS

Nicholas Carter, 18, was summoned for unlawfully playing football on the highway at Dunstable, on March 6<sup>th</sup>, to the annoyance of the public, and contrary to the bye-laws of the Borough. He admitted the offence.

P.c. Barker stated that about 7.50 on the evening of March 6<sup>th</sup> the defendant and several other young men were playing football in High Street North with a bladder. As soon as they saw the witness they ran away.

The magistrates' Clerk asked if there was any danger to passengers or danger of windows being broken.

Inspector Pickering said these youths, when playing football in the street, kicked the ball about anywhere, irrespective of pedestrians. The Magistrate's Clerk said the bye-law in question read thus; 'Any person who wantonly throws any stone or missile or plays at football or other game, or shall blow any horn or instrument to the annoyance of the inhabitants of the Borough,' shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £2.

The Chairman: The police have had complaints about these games being played in the streets, I believe?

Inspector Pickering replied that they had received several complaints recently. The defendant and other young men of his stamp occasionally took it into their heads to have a little rough horse-play. They did not intend harm to anyone, but that was not the sort of thing to be allowed in the streets.

The Chairman: It does not amount to Hooliganism, then?

Inspector Pickering: Not quite (laughter)

The Chairman said the police had received strict instructions to put that sort of thing down. As the defendant had pleaded guilty, they would deal leniently with him. He would be fined 2s 6d and 2s 6d costs.

*Note. The average wage for a factory worker at this time was about £1 a week.*

## Our Empire

Lecture At The Grammar School

There was a large attendance at the Dunstable Grammar School on Thursday evening when Mr. W. Marshall BCL, MA, lecturer to the Royal United Services Institution, London, gave his popular lecture on 'Our Empire.' Sir Edward Sebright, Bart., Beechwood, presided. The lecture was illustrated with eighty splendid views, the lantern being manipulated by the Head-Master, Mr. LCR Thring and Mr. Allport.

*(The lecture was in two parts. The first part was a jingoistic retelling of the stories of Drake and other early explorers and conquerors. The second part was a peon of praise for 'the dear old flag' and the throne. The Empire was built on 'courage and loyalty' and was dependent on a strong navy and a powerful War Office. Clearly, Mr. Marshall thought that this was one Empire upon which the sun would never set.)*



from Punch 1897: *The British lion at Spithead with his cheering colonial offsprings, says "Lor' love you, my lads, this is the proudest moment of my life!" - The little flags say Australia, New Zealand, The Cape and Canada.*

*Articles selected by Hugh Garrod*

# The Hunt For Sir Nigel Loring

## Hugh Garrod

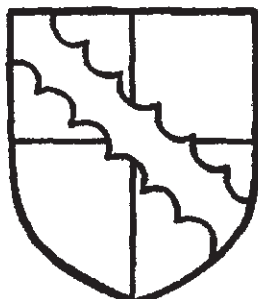
A few months ago, the Rector, Revd Graham Newton, gave me an email which he had received from the States enquiring about a possible burial in the Priory Churchyard. The name requested was the above named gentleman. I knew of the name but nothing specific so I went through my local books and consulted the reference section of our Library. He is mentioned in Richard Walden's 'Streets Ahead', in several of Vivienne Evans' books and many others. I emailed the States with the fruits of my searching and realised from the reply I received that my

contact, Bob, knew more about Sir Nigel Loring than I did. Our correspondence prompted me to visit the County Archive in Bedford and the Hudson Memorial Library in St Albans Abbey, to write to the archivists in Ely and Lincoln Cathedrals and to request, through Dunstable Library, a copy of a thesis written at Nottingham University. It also prompted me to undertake two pieces of research which have nothing much to do with the subject in hand. I now know a lot about Sir Nigel and I have even been able to give Bob one or two details which he did not previously have. I have not, however, been able to answer the question which he asked in his original email to the Rector. The question was, 'Is Sir Nigel buried in the Priory Churchyard?'

The name has appeared in different forms over the centuries as Loryng, Lorying and finally Loring. It originates from Lorraine. Albert of Lorraine was a cleric in the times of Edward the Confessor and was court chaplain to William the Conqueror. In the Domesday records, Albert holds three hides at Chalgrave, Wootton and Sharnbrook.

Sir Nigel was Lord of the manor at Chalgrave and was a benefactor, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, to the Priory Church. He died in 1386. There are two medieval tombs in Chalgrave Church, one of which is

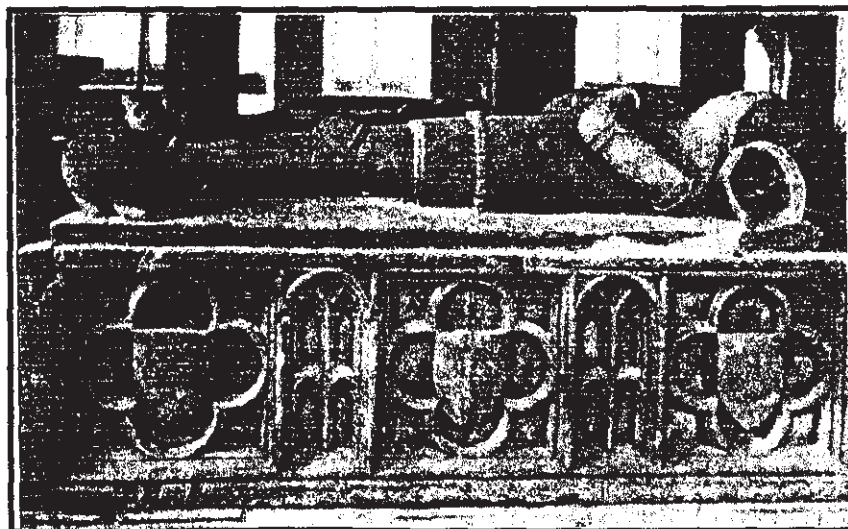
*The presumed tomb stone of Sir Nigel Loring in Chalgrave Church. The shields are empty and so, do not exhibit the arms of Loring.*



**Loring Shield**  
*Quarterly Argent and gules a bend engrailed sable*

supposed to be his. Sir Nigel's will, however states that he is to be buried, next to his wife, in Dunstable Priory Churchyard. It seems unlikely that the wishes of such a famous person would be ignored after his death. If he is in the churchyard, is there anything under the tomb in Chalgrave Church? The burial records at the Priory only start in 1558, so they are no help. The initial question is, as yet unanswered. Nigel Loring is, however, an interesting character, so much so, that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote two novels about him, 'Sir Nigel' and 'The White Company.'

Sir Nigel was one of the most famous warriors of his time. He fought on campaigns with Edward III and Edward the Black Prince. In 1340 he was the hero of the naval battle of Sluys when the English fleet defeated the much larger French one. This was at the beginning of the Hundred Years War. He fought at Crecy and at Poitiers. He was one of the original Knights of the Garter and was Chamberlain to the Black Prince. He was well thought of as a diplomat and was involved in treaty negotiations. Sir Nigel was rewarded by being granted ferry and tin mining rights in the Duchy of Cornwall. The jousting tournament at Dunstable in 1341 was held in his honour. He retired from military service in 1370. Sir Nigel gave money for the building of the stone cloisters at St Albans Abbey and for Chantries at Chalgrave and the Priory. The original question, however, remains unanswered. Where is Sir Nigel Loring buried? As yet, I cannot say.



# ‘TO ROAST LARKS THE DUNSTABLE WAY’

by Colin Bourne

*‘Many of you will know that in the 19th century Dunstable larks were considered a great delicacy and that thousands of them were sent to London each year, caught on the Downs during the night by men using large nets. A compilation of references to this regrettable ‘industry’, put together by Omer Roucoux, was included in the second Society ‘Newsletter’ in August ‘94. ~*

*Some of you may belong to the RSPB (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and will receive their excellent quarterly magazine, ‘Birds’. In the Winter edition there was a letter from a Mr. Scholey, of Leeds who had found an old, much-used, dilapidated recipe book, published in 1868, on the front of which was written, in faded pencil, ‘Grandma’s Recipe Book’.*

*In this book is a recipe for roasting larks, which was reproduced in ‘Birds’ as part of Mr. Scholey’s letter. It is included on this page; note two dozen larks were required! At the foot of the recipe there follow references to various methods of cooking larks, the first of which is ‘To Roast Larks the Dunstable Way’.*

*A telephone call to the Editor of ‘Birds’, who was extremely interested in hearing about Dunstable and the larks (purely, of course, from a historical point of view) elicited his permission to use the entry, if we so wished, in our ‘Newsletter’. Via the editor I wrote to Mr. Scholey and very quickly received a reply, together with further extracts from the book. As a point of interest Mr. Scholey has a small farm and tells me that when he goes walking in the Dales or on the moors of North Yorkshire, skylarks are ‘in plentiful supply’.*

*So, here can be found the Dunstable way to roast larks, but on pain of instant death don’t anyone try it.*

## To Roast Larks the Dunstable Way

Time: twenty five minutes

Two dozen larks; some breadcrumbs; some butter

Put two dozen larks on a bird spit, tie them on a common spit, and put them down to a moderate fire; rub the crumbs of a stale loaf through a colander, baste the larks with butter, and sprinkle them with breadcrumbs. Baste them often, strew breadcrumbs on them repeatedly, and let them be a nice brown; in the meantime, take a good quantity of breadcrumbs, put

some butter in a pan, and fry the crumbs crisp and brown. Place the larks in a dish, arranged in a circle, with the fried crumbs in the centre, nearly as high as the larks, or even higher.

Serve them with plain butter in a tureen, or add the juice of a lemon and a pinch of Cayenne



Larks on toast

Here is the old recipe as published in ‘Birds’

## To Roast Larks

### INGREDIENTS

Two dozen larks

Salt

Pepper

Nutmeg

Sprig of parsley

One egg

Breadcrumbs

Melted butter

Pick and clean the birds, cut off the heads and legs, pick out the gizzards, and season inside with pepper, salt, nutmeg and a very little chopped parsley. Brush with the yolks of well-beaten eggs, dip them into breadcrumbs, covering very thickly, run a small bird spit through them, and fasten it to a larger one, and put them to roast before a bright fire, basting them constantly with butter, or they will burn. Arrange in a circle round a dish, and fill the centre with a pile of crumbs of bread, fried crisp and brown in a little butter. Serve with melted butter, with the juice of half a lemon squeezed into it.

There will be  
**a Coffee Evening**  
on Wednesday July 17th  
from 7pm onwards  
at 12 Friars Walk.  
By kind invitation of  
Mr Bernard Stevens

## The first Channel crossing by glider started from Dunstable

*Geoffrey Stephenson, MBE, electrical engineer and glider pilot, was born on June 27, 1911. He died on January 29, 2002, aged 90. In his obituary The Times of March 8, 2002 relates a little known fact. Here is an extract :*

ON APRIL 23, 1939 a blue sailplane was launched from the London Gliding Club airfield, Dunstable Downs. Its pilot was Geoffrey Stephenson, who flew in a brisk northwesterly wind on a flight taking him across Hertfordshire, Essex, the Thames Estuary and down into Kent near Canterbury. The soaring weather was excellent and he decided he could reach Hawkinge airfield on the south Kent coast.

Nearing his goal, at only 1000 ft above the ground, he hit a strong thermal lift which took him up at more than 20ft per second. Stephenson immediately thought of trying to gain enough height to enable him to soar across the English Channel, a feat never before attempted. This thermal carried him up into a larger cumulus cloud inside which he climbed on basic instruments.

At 6,000 ft above ground he came out of cloud to find himself already out to sea and set off towards France. Despite encountering strong sinking air, he reached the French coast just east of Cap Gris Nez with just enough height to fly towards Boulogne and selected a landing field at the village of Le Wast. His 127-mile flight from Dunstable had taken two hours 40 minutes. This remarkable achievement in a glider of low performance by today's standards was treated by national newspapers as a major first.

### 1901 Census

The 1901 Census for the Dunstable area is now available on microfiche at the local library. The Census for the whole of Bedfordshire can be seen on microfilm at the County Record Office. To date the Census is still not accessible on the Internet !

Note for those who have access to the internet. Here is a good site for starting some research : <http://www.bcclgis.gov.uk/gateway/subject.htm> It also gives you a good choice of search engines

### Bedfordshire Local History Association AGM and Lecture Toddington Village Hall Saturday 18 May 2002, at 2.15 pm

The speaker will be Dr Kate Tiller of the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education.

Her topic is

**English Local History : The State of the Art**

Put this date in your diaries.

### Bedfordshire Local History Association Conference 2002 Saturday 15th June

Organised by the Riseley Historical Society

There will be talks on Riseley local history, a tour of the church and of the oldest house; and exhibitions and demonstrations of old village crafts

The full schedule for the day will be available later. A luncheon will be served at midday as well as the customary tea and coffee.

Members of our society who are interested should contact Joan Curran.

### FORD END WATERMILL IVINGHOE, BUCKS

#### Opening Times 2002

1 April Easter Monday  
5 May Sunday  
6 May Bank Holiday Monday (M)  
12 May Sunday - National Mills Day (M)  
2 June Sunday  
4 June Tuesday - Jubilee Bank Holiday (M)  
7 July Sunday  
14 July Sunday (M)  
4 August Sunday  
26 August Bank Holiday Monday (M)  
1 September Sunday  
15 September Sunday—National Heritage WE  
Afternoons 2.30 - 5.30

MILLING DEMONSTRATIONS  
on dates marked with (M) between 3 and 5 pm  
approx. when stone ground wholemeal flour  
will be on sale.  
ADMISSION Adults £1.20 Children (5-15) 40p