

# NEWSLETTER

*Dunstable and District  
Local History Society*

No 20

September 2003



## *The Chairman's Report*

During the Summer we have experienced three interesting and diverse outings. Our first, a visit to **Chicksands Priory**, provided the interesting prospect of passing through a military checkpoint to get to our destination. We were met by a band of dedicated and enthusiastic guides who were delighted to tell us about their beautiful building and its intriguing history. It was interesting to see how diverse owners had adapted the building to their own particular requirements.

**Lampton Hall** was a gem of a visit, which is not on the main tourist route. After deciding whether or not we could get the coach through the main gates, we were warmly welcomed by the guides who shared with us the fascinating history of their building and the people who lived had there. We also enjoyed the tea, the gardens, the farm implements and the lovely church across the road. The latter contained the memorial to the first President of the National Union of Teachers.

The visit to **The Globe** was on one of the hottest days of the year. There were occasional cool breezes and the wonderful air conditioning in the Tate Modern. Not only did we see the building which Ann Ward had described to us so eloquently, but we also saw part of a rehearsal of *The Taming Of The Shrew* taking place on the stage. Our guide was both enthusiastic and knowledgeable and shared her love of The Globe with us. We also had an opportunity to cross the Millennium Bridge to St. Paul's Cathedral and to visit other interesting sites in the area. Despite the heat, we had a most enjoyable day.

History Week was a great success, the high light being the launch of Tony Ward's book, *Strike Up The Band*. I would like to thank Tony Ward and Paul Bowes, as well as everyone who looked after our exhibition in the Baptist Hall or who helped in any way.

Having seen the preliminary drawings of **the Arts Centre**, as shown in the Dunstable Gazette, I was struck by the similarity to the Queensway Hall, complete with flat roofs and huge areas of glass. I thought, initially, that they were photographs of our dear departed building. I saw no mention of tiered seating. Have our planners and architects learnt anything from history or are we being given Queensway Hall mark two, with all the faults of the first? *Hugh Garrod*



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## COMING EVENTS

### 2 TALKS AT LUTON MUSEUM

\* 11th September How to research your family's history

\* 16th September How to trace the history of a house

Both talks start at 2.30 pm.

Admission is free but places should be booked in advance by phone on 01582 54672

### AT THE COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Riverside Building, County Hall  
Cauldwell Street, Bedford  
Saturday 13th September.

10.00 am to 4.00 pm

Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service are holding an open day, with guided tours **behind the scenes and displays of documents from the Middle Ages to the present day.**

(Car parking at County Hall costs £1)  
See Joan Curran for application form.

## Winter Programme

On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2003, The Christmas Social Evening will take place in the Methodist Church Hall, as usual.

The AGM will take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> March. (Not on 13<sup>th</sup>)

## William Little Burr — Hugh Garrod

The churchyards of Dunstable Priory and the other churches of the town were closed in 1860 when the new cemetery was opened in West Street. Burials were still allowed in existing vaults and family graves. The penultimate burial in the Priory churchyard took place in September 1903. *The Dunstable Borough Gazette* for the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1903 states,

On Saturday afternoon the interment took place in the family vault in the churchyard of the Old Priory Church, Dunstable, of the remains of Mr. William Little Burr, of Fairholme Lodge, Barnes, who was Financial Secretary to the British Medical Association, and who was born of an old established and highly respected Dunstable family. The interment took place amid many manifestations of respect, the large and representative company of mourners present being an indication of the high esteem in which the deceased gentlemen was held. The *British Medical Journal* of September 12 says, 'All who knew Mr. William L. Burr, will be grieved to hear of his death, which took place a few days ago after a short illness. A melancholy feature in the case is that he was on holiday at the time, and he actually died in a hotel at Hindhead. His last hours, however, were watched over by a devoted wife and affectionate brother. Mr. Burr, who was in his 60th year, had shown symptoms of failing health for some months, but it was thought that rest and change of scene would soon set him up again. About a week before his death he was struck down by what seems to have been an apoplectic stroke, and although there was a partial return of consciousness, he passed away peacefully just before midnight on Tuesday, September 8th. Mr. Burr was appointed assistant Secretary to the British Medical Association in November 1883, and Financial Secretary in the early part of 1898. Before entering the service of the Association he had been for a long time with Messrs. Price, Waterhouse and Co., public accountants, and for nine years before his appointment, he audited the books of the Association for his principals. In this way, he acquired a thorough knowledge of the financial affairs of the Association, which made him especially valuable as an official. He was a man of most amiable character, courteous in manner, kindly to all in need of help, and straightforward in his dealings. In Mr. Burr the Association has lost an able and useful

official and the staff a highly respected colleague. We are sure that the deepest sympathy will be felt by all members of the Association for Mrs. Burr in her sad bereavement.

The body was removed from Hindhead to Fairholme Lodge, whence it was conveyed to Dunstable on Saturday morning. Messrs. Snewing and Green, of Grayshott, Hindhead, were the undertakers and Messrs. C. Lockhart and Son capably carried out the local arrangements. The coffin, which was of polished oak with brass furniture, bore the following inscription: 'William Little Burr. Born 25th March 1844. Fell asleep in Jesus, September 8th 1903.' The funeral service was conducted by Rev W W C Baker, Rector of Dunstable, assisted by the Rev John Gregory (an old friend of the deceased) Putney, and the Rev A J Brewster. The deceased's favourite hymn 'The King of love, my shepherd is' was reverently sung by the choir.

There follows a list of mourners and floral tributes.

As previously stated, the deceased gentleman came of one of the oldest Dunstable families. There is in the Old Priory Church a memorial window to the memory of his father, by Mr. Edward Burr, Mr. W L Burr and the Rev GH Burr, and there is also a marble tablet in the church erected to the memory of the deceased's mother, who died in 1844.

The window alluded to is no more, but the dedication to the Peter window in the Priory says, 'In loving memory of Sarah Hooper, a native of the Parish, who died at Watford 2nd February 1883 and was buried in the joining Churchyard. This window was erected by her grandsons Edward T Burr and William L Burr.' The tablet, in the South Aisle, is dedicated to Frances Sarah Burr, aged 22, wife of Edward Burr and mother of three young children. She died on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1844, when William Little Burr was not yet three weeks old.

The 1901 Census tells us that William L Burr, aged 57, lives at Fairholme Lodge, Upper Richmond Road, Barnes, in the Parliamentary constituency of Kingston in Surrey. The others registered are Winifred A Burr, wife aged 37 born in Bushey; Charles F Burr, cousin aged 22, an undergraduate at Cambridge University; Alice Bonfield, cook aged 31; Rose Giles, Parlour Maid aged 18 and Elizabeth M Bonfield, servant aged 64, maybe Alice's mother.

William Little Burr is buried near the North Door of the Priory. The same grave contains his brother, Edward Thomas Burr, who died on 18th March 1930. This burial is not mentioned at all in the Dunstable Gazettes of 1930, even though it was the last one in the Priory churchyard.

*Information collected by Hugh Garrod*

"Working the ropes" in a telegraph station designed by Lord George Murray (see next pages). Two men handle the shutters and another, using a telescope, reads the message from the next station, shown here much closer that it would have been.

*From a 'Cable and Wireless' advertisement from the 1950s*



## PRIORY HOUSE

Several members of the committee of the Society have recently met with the consultants preparing the bid for lottery funds for the purchase of Priory House. We were invited to put forward our ideas as to how we, as representatives of the Society, envisaged the future of the house if the lottery bid was successful.

Promoting the heritage aspect the proposals we put forward were:

1. There should be a permanent display on the history of Priory House itself.
2. There should be exhibitions on the history of Dunstable, some of which might be permanent and some changed from time. (Some of the displays could be in the entrance area or cafe, to lead visitors on to others in an area dedicated to heritage material.)
3. One room should be allocated for the keeping of archives and items donated to the Society.
4. A study room, preferably separate but possibly combined with 3, which could be made available for students and researchers by arrangement.

There is a possibility that a group of adjoining rooms could be made available to provide a heritage area, probably on the first floor. Though some professional paid



help to set up displays, etc., could almost certainly be provided for the first three years, with the aid of grants, volunteers would be needed to help with the stewarding of the heritage area for part of the week, at pre-arranged times, and the Council would look to the Society to help with this.

The consultants saw the position of the house, close to the Priory, as a great advantage. Educational groups and tourists could combine visits to both places at one time, and the two could work in conjunction with one another to their mutual advantage. The guided visits to the Priory and the tours of the town were seen as a very useful asset and Priory House could provide a convenient starting point for both of these.

It would, of course, be necessary to generate income from the use of the house, and it was planned to have a cafe/restaurant on the ground floor, looking out on to the gardens.

The possibility of letting some rooms for meetings for small groups, or for offices, was also being explored. Meanwhile, watch this space!

*Joan Curran*

The saga of Priory House continues. Priory House has immense potential in telling certain parts of the story of Dunstable. It's association with the Priory Church is important and would make a good interpretation venue. The House would make a valuable centre for history and study groups visiting the town. The discussions at the moment are to explore all the possibilities for the building. It is very encouraging but will be of little value if the bid is unsuccessful. My own thoughts on the matter are that in Priory House we could have a wonderful asset. If the bid does come through, it will be important that our Society in particular and that the people of Dunstable in general see the potential of this unique building, take it to our hearts, and make it our own.

*Hugh Garrod*

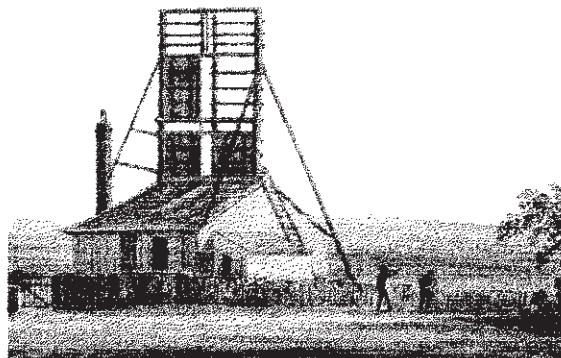
## The Dunstable Downs Signalling Station

### Omer Roucoux

The water colour painting on the right is the well known signalling station which was situated on Dunstable Downs not far from the present day car park, near the Ordnance Survey triangulation point. It was painted by George Shepherd in 1819, five years after the station was demolished. It was therefore done from memory and hearsay. The painting is now on public display in the Council Chamber at Grove House.

In 1794, the news of the famous telegraph inaugurated by Claude Chappe in France arrived in England; details of it had been found on a French prisoner of war and discussions were started to adopt such a system of communication. War with revolutionary France pointed to the need for rapid communication between London and the naval stations. However in 1795 a mathematical don of Cambridge called Gamble experimented with a five shutter system. It was not as elegant as Chappe's moving arm telegraph but would provide an instrument that was robust and serviceable enough for such a function. In August 1795, Lord George Murray (1761-1803), (later Bishop of St David's) presented to the Admiralty a rival design which won their approval. Murray's design had six shutters, all of the same shape, arranged two by two vertically. Each shutter was three feet square (sometimes the corners were cut making them octagonal, or even circular) and separated sideways by a space half their own width, so as to make the signal easier to read. A system of ropes or chains could manoeuvre the shutters in either vertical position, making them visible, or horizontal, making them invisible from afar. The operation had been compared to bell-ringing, and the series of "pulls" were called "courses" as in campanology. The number of changes, 63 possible combinations, was probably the deciding factor for the Admiralty, it allowed 24 letters of the alphabet to be coded easily (J and U were missing, replaced by I and V), distributed into four "courses" of six letters each. Using two positions for "not at work" and "ready to receive", this left 37 positions for coded words or full sentences. These were chosen among the most used in the messages, for example "Word ended", "French", "Dutch", "Frigate", "Convoy", "Fleet", etc. A page with code detail is given on the opposite page, entitled *A View of the TELEGRAPH erected on the Admiralty Office, Charing Cross, in February 1796*. The alphabet has been reconstructed and some sentences quoted. The list is obviously not complete.

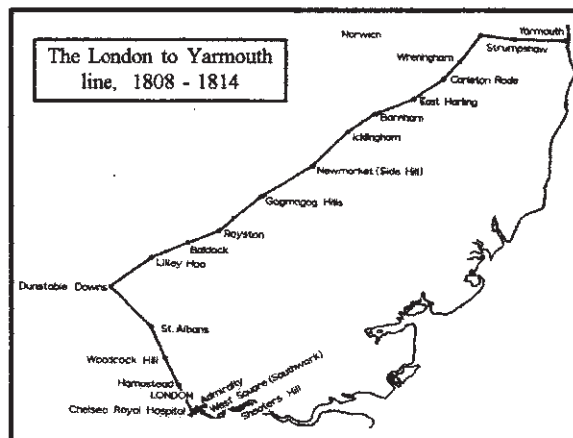
Having decided on Murray's system, the Admiralty had to consider where to apply it. It lost little time. On 25 September 1795, George Roebuck, a surveyor, was appointed to select sites for stations on lines to link London with Deal, Sheerness and Portsmouth. The work started immediately and the lines were in operation before the end of 1796. This was a fine achievement given that it had no precedent. The labour of seeking out likely elevated spots, some in remote districts, in all weathers, and then testing them and dealing with landowners, some of them no doubt ill disposed, was considerable. After the cost of the installation the system was estimated to cost nearly £3000 a year to run.



The Yarmouth line was first considered in 1801, but it was only in 1807 that Roebuck was instructed to carry out a survey. The direct line from London was not practicable because of the London smoke. So a line was drafted going first along the line of Watling Street to Dunstable Downs, then turning at a right angle in an east-north-east direction towards the Gogmagog hills near Cambridge and then on to the east coast.

The sharp turn on the Dunstable Downs made some people suggest that they would have needed two stations at a right angle but the Admiralty records do not mention two machines or an extra crew. But it is possible that the angle was divided into two to make the signal visible, slightly askew from both directions.

The speed of transmission was remarkable taking only 17 minutes for a signal to go from London to Plymouth. The telegraph could send 6 signs a minute — a word of 6 letters for example. In order to improve the transfer rate a shorthand was used in addition to the coded full formed sentences. For example : "H.M.S. ROYAL SOVEREIGN ANCHORED AT SPITHEAD YESTERDAY SAILING FOR PLYMOUTH TOMORROW" (80 signs, including the "new word" sign) became "RSOV ANCHOR SPITD YESDA SAIL PLYT TMRO" (38 signs) taking less than half the time. Later some optical telegraphs were slightly faster but real speed only came with the electric telegraph after 1850.



Below, the Admiralty instructions giving the code for the Murray telegraph system. In the middle of the page half the text of the manuscript instructions has been copied and enlarged for readability, continuing below due to lack of space.

**Important note :** In the text *Letter A*, or *Letter C*, actually mean "the illustration below the letter A or C" it should be *Fig A* or *Fig C*, NOT the code for the letter A or C.

**A View of the TELEGRAPH erected at the Admiralty Office Charing Cross in Feb. 1796**

**Explanation**

*When the Telegraph appears as at Letter A with the Ports all open, it's not at Work, but when the Ports are all shut, as at Letter C it denotes it's going to work, and a Signal for the next Telegraph to look out in order to Answer.*

*The Alphabet Explain'd*

*When the Telegraph appears as at Letter C with the Ports all shut the opening of the first denotes the Letter a, the second b, the third c, the fourth d, the fifth e and the sixth f. This is called the First Course — The second course, the Telegraph appears, as at Letter A with the ports all open, the Shutting of either denotes a Letter as they are Mark'd this Course contains the Letters g h i k l m these are Term'd the Second Course — The Third Course the Telegraph appears as at Letter B, then opening of either that are shut, or shutting of either that are open denotes the Letters n o p q r s — The fourth Course the Telegraph appears as at Letter D the Opening or Shutting of either denotes the Letters t v w x y z.*

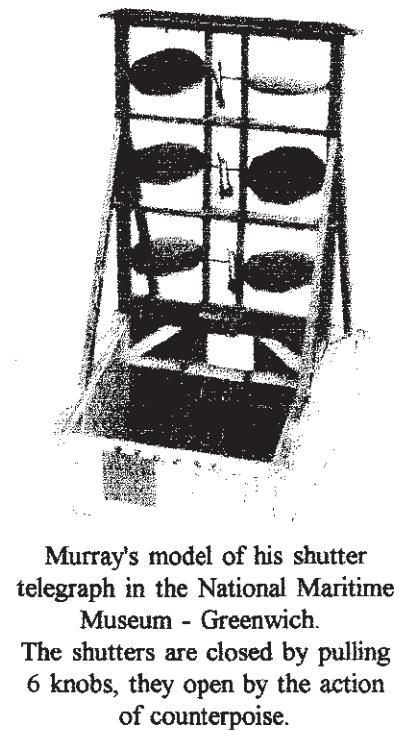
*Sentences Explain'd When the Order is to Communicate, to the Post Admiral in the Downs only, the Telegraph appears as at Letter E ...*

Code for the Murray shutter telegraph after the instructions of the Admiralty - 1796

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Oscar ROUCOLUX — Durable July 2003

Above, the Murray code for the alphabet (lines 2 - 5). On the first line the code for "not at work" and "ready to receive". Lines 6 and 7 give special shorthand signals. Reconstituted following the instructions given by the Admiralty in the text on the left. The vertical space between the shutters is not shown.



The text continues as follows : ... with the two Lower Ports open ; for the Post Admiral at Portsmouth the two Middle Ports open, as at Letter F, and for the Post Admiral at Plymouth, the two Upper Ports open as at Letter G — Commanders of Fleet Squadrons and Cruisers have each a different Signal for example the Letter H for the Commander of the Channel Fleet, at Letter J for the Commander of the North Sea Fleet, at Letter K For the Commander of the West India Fleet or Convoys and at Letter L, For the Cruisers in such a Port as Signify'd.

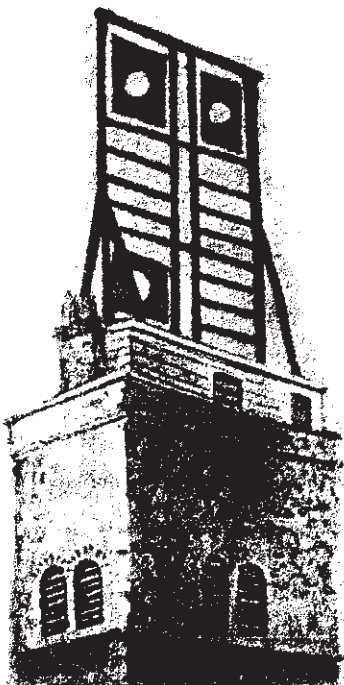
The course they are to start are likewise denoted in the Following manner, at Letter M to sail to the Northward the First fair Wind, at Letter N to sail to the Eastward the First fair Wind, at Letter O to sail to the Southward the First fair Wind, and at Letter P to sail to the Westward, the First fair Wind.

A Signal for a Court Martial to sit, and try Offenders is made and appears, as Letter Q — And a Letter R to put the Sentence of Court Martial into execution —

The Shepherd water colour is inaccurate in a number of ways, but it is nevertheless very instructive in others.

Many people who described the painting could not understand the presence of 18 "shutters". To make each 3 foot square board oscillate by 90° even with levers and counterpoise, very often working against the wind, the force must have been enormous. Two people only were changing the position of up to six shutters every 10 seconds. This must have been an athletic performance. An obvious solution was to replace each shutter by three smaller slats 1 by 3 foot in size, working together as in venetian blinds. We can understand that Shepherd remembered many "shutters", actually narrow slats working in six groups of three. The top two shutters are shown open (that is the three slats or sections of each are horizontal), shutter 3 is shown closed (the three slats are vertical) but instead of three that shutter shows four small sections and their axes are not in line with those of shutter number 4, on the right, which are all open. The shutters below, numbers 5 and 6 are both closed. The vertical space is clearly shown, except that the top part of the vertical beam is not in line with its bottom part. The ropes and levers which must have been visible in that space (cf. instructions of the Admiralty on the previous page) are not shown. A horizontal space is shown between shutters 3-4 and 5-6, while there is no space between shutters 1-2 and 3-4. Why did he draw a circle on each of these small panels? Perhaps he remembered, or was told, that the shutters were roughly circular in shape.

The drawings of the St Albans signalling station, show many variations. Neither of those I have seen are completely accurate. The one below, also by George Shepherd, has also 18 small sections working in groups of three to form six shutters, but the closed shutters do not show that they are made of smaller sections, they don't have pivoting axes and are square with a hole in the middle which seems unlikely as this would have made them less visible.

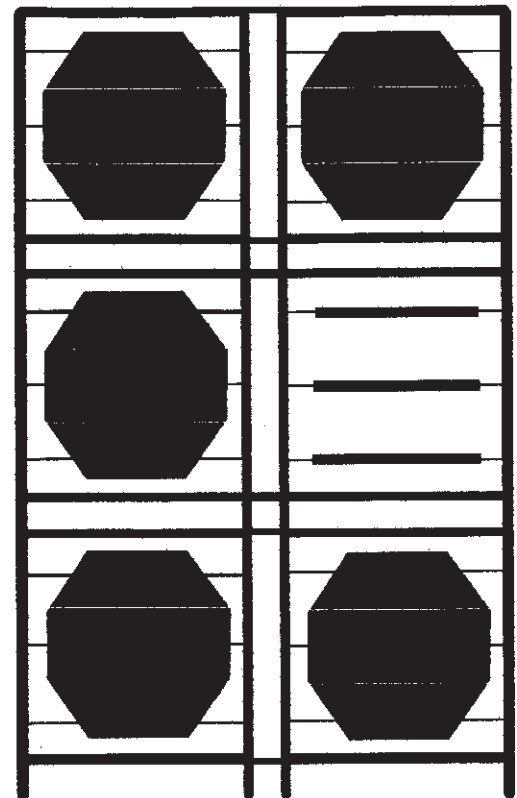


As can be seen on the map the signals arrived at Dunstable Downs from St Albans. The frame was situated on the well known clock tower near the market. It was at an altitude of 94 m (310 ft) above sea level. Although the frame was placed askew, from one corner of the narrow flat roof to the other, the position must have been cramped for the operators, who were presumably crowded into the room immediately below. There was the consolation that they were in the heart of a busy town and not on an isolated hill. The tower is nowadays not visible from Dunstable Downs because of the vegetation.

Shutters 1 & 2  
The 3 sections  
are vertical  
(Visible)

Shutters 3 & 4  
Shutter 4 has  
his 3 sections  
horizontal  
(invisible)

Shutters 5 & 6  
the 3 sections  
are vertical  
(Visible)



Above reconstruction of the Dunstable panels as they could have been. It shows the code of D for Dunstable. Each shutter, a square yard in surface area, is divided into three sections opening or closing together like louvre windows, offering much less resistance to the wind than a single large shutter in one piece.

Dunstable station was on the Downs, 18.5 km (11.3 miles) from St Albans, at an altitude of 214 m (796 ft). The next station was at a distance of 14½ km (9 miles) It was on top of Telegraph Hill at Lilley Hoo, a mile north of Lilley village, next to the Icknield Way footpath. This hill can be seen from the Downs beyond the Marsh Farm high-rise buildings. It must have been quite an accomplishment to read the panels at that distance. It would be approximately like reading the model above (scale 1/30) from about 500 m. or 1/3 of a mile away. Good quality telescopes that could magnify at least 20 times were in use by the Navy at the time. Using one would be equivalent to looking at our model from a distance of 25 metres (75 feet).

The main problem was not actually the distance, one can actually see Aylesbury County Hall, with the naked eye, from the Downs in clear weather and that is 20 km (32 miles) away. The main problem was the weather, since the smoke, in London, was often a problem and there was fog, everywhere. Some years the system could only be used on one day out of three.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Geoffrey WILSON : *The Old Telegraphs* Phillimore 1976

## RESTORATION OF THE PRIORY CHURCH, DUNSTABLE.

# A BAZAAR

IN AID OF THE FUNDS WILL BE HELD IN

THE ASHTON SCHOOL-ROOMS, DUNSTABLE

On *TUESDAY* and *WEDNESDAY*, JULY 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 1876,

The publishing of *Sally the Dunstable Witch* not only highlighted the plight of the Priory Churchyard, but also drew attention to the fact that the sum of £1000 was still required to complete the restoration of the Priory Church. The restoration had been started 25 years before but nothing had been done for the past 10 years and money was only slowly trickling into the fund. When the idea of a bazaar was first proposed there was a divided opinion as to the propriety of one, but this was soon overruled when the proposal was met with the sympathy and support of the whole town

Although inexperienced the committee certainly organised an event on a grand scale. The Ashton school-rooms were available, so why have only one day when two would be twice as good. The ladies of influential families in the town formed the committee and must have worked exceedingly hard and given it a great deal of thought. Where did they get all those items from that were offered for sale as they all appear to be of quality? Everyone in the area with a title or estate appears to have been asked for his or her patronage. An impressive advertisement was placed in the local paper and just to make sure it was well attended, the Great Northern Railway attached Saloon Carriages to the 11.45 a.m. fast train from King's Cross for the out of town visitors. The Countess Brownlow of Ashridge was invited to open the bazaar and on the actual day was accompanied by Lady Marian Alford who had opened the first fund raising event.

On Tuesday morning the Priory bells were rung, the Borough flag waved proudly from the balcony of the Town Hall, and Church Street was the busiest place where *'the loyal cottagers had swept the path and washed their doorsteps'* and made the area very festive. At Ashton School the pathway had been newly gravelled and red, white and blue banners hung across it while the door way sported an evergreen arch. At 1.30pm the school-room was so hot and crowded that *'locomotion was all but impossible'*. Mauve

and white was the colour chosen for the stalls, and the names of the ladies presiding were printed in mauve on a white background, and placed over each stall. A very varied selection of articles was on display with the prices ranging from one penny to £25, *a variety enough to meet the wishes of infancy and childhood or requirements of mature life.*

The Reverend Frederick Hose made a speech containing such phrases as *deepest and most heartfelt gratitude, condescending patronage to the Countess Brownlow and great liberality and zeal of the contributors ending with "Perhaps the Countess will be kind enough to declare, that the Bazaar is opened."* To which she replied *"I declare the bazaar open"*. It must be assumed that is all she said, as the Gazette usually reported the spoken word verbatim.

The list of saleable items reads like an Aladdin's cave and must have been awe-inspiring. The Countess Brownlow attended her stall for a considerable portion of the day and the goods displayed there included a pair of very fine grey china vases, cut glass, paintings, a very beautiful table cloth from the Caucasus contributed by her Imperial Highness the Duchess of Edinburgh, who also sent some valuable ornaments. These included a polar bear in silver on a rock; and a bottled-nosed whale in silver, lying on a piece of crystal that resembled a block of ice. Other stalls belonging to lady patronesses contained bog oak book racks, Japanese umbrellas, fans, trays, needlework, and many other useful, elegant, and valuable articles too numerous to mention. During the day the Countess purchased a watercolour sketch of the Priory Church, contributed by H. Elliott, Esq.. A much-appreciated contribution from her was the fine black and white grapes, splendid peaches and other fruit from the Ashridge kitchen garden under the care of Mr Sage.

Restoration project by Mr Somers Clarke, arch. The money raised was insufficient to make the changes. From a postcard published by Chas. Smith as "Priory Church in the year 1100".



Other ladies were busy selling beautifully worked screens, old china, woolwork, point lace, rich drawing room furniture, fender stools, clothes, smoking caps, cosies, perfumery, knives, forks, biscuit jars, sugar basins, sardine boxes, paper knives, workboxes and a dinner service valued at six guineas and a half. A handsome drawing room tidy, some dolls in costume dress; some very pretty leather brackets worked by Mrs Cartwright; a large collection of inkstands contributed by Messrs. Hyde and Co., of London; note paper given by Messrs Barclay and Co; pretty Madame Angot baskets, and a large assortment of toys and antique banner screens. Other interesting contributions had originated from visits to China, Japan, and France and included a very varied store of fancy boxes, pin cushions, butter-coolers, needle-cases, sofa cushions, cases, smoking caps, fancy balls, crochet work, a sewing machine, money boxes, embroidered handkerchiefs, Dalton ware in the shape of jugs, stone ware, a ring stand, tobacco box, Japanese boxes, Parisian fancy goods, egg baskets and cruets. The Day and Sunday Scholars, under Miss Sandham, provided a stall with toys, perfumery, needle and crochet work and raised the respectable sum of £16.1.3.

Could it be possible that even now some of those items are gathering dust in someone's attic? A view of the south aisle of the Priory Church, worked by Mrs. Somers Clarke from a design by her husband, the architect George Somers Clarke, Esq.; a French clock and several watercolours painted by Mrs Henry Elliott; a water bottle priced at three guineas and a fac-simile of a Roman water bottle found in the ruins of St. Alban's Abbey; a beautifully worked banner screen and a worked cushion, yellow ground with heart's, case bound in green silk; a serpent made of used postage stamps and a Roman urn of coloured rough and ready straw plait, an ingenious device cleverly executed.

*There was also a straw built house (not the only one that straw has built) designed for some Lilliputian whose measure is something less than that of the standard for the Grenadier Guards. This house was under a glass shade. Round the house was a beautifully smooth lawn, ornamented by beds of flowers. The approach to the house was by a gravel path, the "gravel" looking uncommonly like toasted bread-crumbs, and the door was reached by a flight of two steps - all done in straw, as natural as life.*

A Post Office was situated in the bazaar and during the day a great number of letters were delivered. *The duties of postmaster, sorter and letter carrier being discharged with remarkable diligence and to the entire satisfaction of her Majesty's lieges by a gentleman who did not wear her Majesty's uniform, but who had a scarf round his hat.*

In the Priory Grounds, open by kind permission of W. Hunt Esq., those with enough energy were able to take part in tennis and croquet tournaments. While others could relax in the Priory Gardens and enjoy a selection of music performed by the Band of the Coldstream Guards, their participation due to a generous and anonymous benefactor who paid their expenses.

By Tuesday evening the receipts and contributions amounted to £736.2.5 and the restoration fund target looked within reach. Her Grace the Duchess of Bedford and Mrs Leigh of Luton Hoo both donated £100 each. Continuing on the Wednesday up to ten o'clock at night the final total amounted to £1114.12.0 enough to complete the restoration. BUT - it did not end there.

As many articles remained unsold, it was decided to re-open the bazaar again on Friday from 3pm until 10 o'clock. There was a good attendance in the evening probably due to an announcement that a pianoforte was to be sold to the highest bidder. Two ladies, who no longer had a use for it, had presented this valuable instrument to the committee. A further attraction was a grand draw. The prizes were to differ in value, and some very lucky people received items worth more than the cost of the ticket, and as there were no blanks everyone was a winner. Some of the more fortunate drew such items as a valuable cushion, a needle case, a couple of photo frames, or a pair of baby's socks, or what not. By this means of 'clearing off' a good many things which would otherwise have been left on hand were disposed of and a very enjoyable evening had by those who attended.

*BUT - still they were not finished, as on 13 December 1876 the following announcement appeared in the paper.*

### **Dunstable Priory Church Restoration Fund Sale To Be Held**

A sale of useful and fancy articles in aid of the fund will be held at the Town Hall Dunstable on Monday 18 December 1876 commencing 2 o'clock and on Wednesday 20 December 1876 commencing at 11 o'clock. Admission Monday 6 pence and Wednesday 3 pence.

*FINALLY - on 20 December 1876 a small paragraph appeared in the paper.*

Bazaar - on Monday a sale took place and is being continued today in the Town Hall of useful and fancy articles remaining over from the bazaar held in the summer on behalf of the restoration fund of the parish church. The receipts on Monday amounted to £20.

*Extracts from Dunstable Borough Gazette.*

*Rita Swift*

Editor : Omer Roucoux