

Newsletter

*Dunstable & District
Local History Society*

N°23

February 2005



The Chairman's Report

As we approach another AGM, it is time for me to put into words my perpetual thanks to all who do so much to make our Society the success which it undoubtedly is. On your behalf, I would like to thank the rest of the Committee, Joan Curran, Gordon Ivinson, Cynthia Turvey, Bernard Stevens, Omer Roucoux, Ron Frith, Ron Driver and Peter Boatwright for the superb work they do around the year for us. We do our very best to organize varied and interesting meetings and outings. I would also like to record my thanks to Rita Swift, for all the research she carries out and to the people who organized the Christmas social so efficiently.

At the time of writing (January), I am receiving and analysing your responses to the questionnaire concerning our Summer events. So far, I have had about thirty replies, most of which encourage us to continue with what we are doing. Hopefully, we will draw the correct conclusions from your answers and that this year's outings will be well supported.

One of the recurring themes of my recent 'Reports' has been the progress being made on Priory House. The latest news is again encouraging. The internal restructuring continues, as do the discussions about the displays and other contents which will be on view when the building eventually opens to the public.

Over the years, I have been given items relevant to the history of Dunstable. These are essentially non-valuable and much of it is paper. Many people have such material, which should not be lost to the town. We have been promised an archive and research room in Priory House where such items can be safely stored and where they will be available for study. At the appropriate time, I will be involved in discussions on the furnishing and running of this room. It is an exciting project, although I expect the setting up process will be quite time consuming.

There are plans for people to be able to become 'Friends of Priory House.' This will enable those interested to be involved in welcoming visitors and to keep the research room open for those who wish to study our local history.

Members of the Society are also engaged in the project 'Dunstable at War.' We mounted a large display in 2004 as part of the town's commemorations of D Day. This year the focus will be on VJ Day. We are currently interviewing people and recording their memories of wartime Dunstable. This is a great privilege for the interviewers. I would like to thank all of you who allow us to come and talk to you.

We are a Local History Society. Our first aim is to provide speakers who can give us interesting talks, with slides, on local history. As the Society progresses through its second decade, it is becoming more and more difficult to find local topics which we have not already dealt with. We have mostly exhausted the local historians who will come and talk to us for 'cost only' payment. We are having to cast our net more widely, booking talks which are not strictly local. The result is that the average cost per session is rising as the appeal to local interest decreases. It may well be that we have to increase subscription levels to pay our way, year by year.

Hugh Garrod

CHEW'S HOUSE

Hugh Garrod

Easter 2005 sees the centenary of the closure of the school in Chew's House. This seems an appropriate moment to review the history of this establishment.

The Charity School 1715 to 1880

William Chew, son of Thomas, died intestate on March 18th 1712. He had intended to endow a charity school for the teaching and clothing of 40 local poor boys. This was inspired by the national movement of the time to found Charity Schools. The Anglican church and SPCK (Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge) encouraged this as an attempt to defuse social unrest and to counter the growing influence of the dissenting churches. Locally, there was a large Baptist congregation, based in Kensworth.

Queen Anne's letter (1711) encouraged the establishment of church schools to teach the Catechism. William's sisters, Jane Cart, Frances Ashton and his nephew Thomas Aynscombe were his executors. They built Chew's House and opened the school to fulfil his intentions. It was funded by estates which produced revenue of £150 per annum. The running of the school was set out in the settlements of 1724 and 1727.



Endowed School, Dunstable.

From Dunstaplelogia

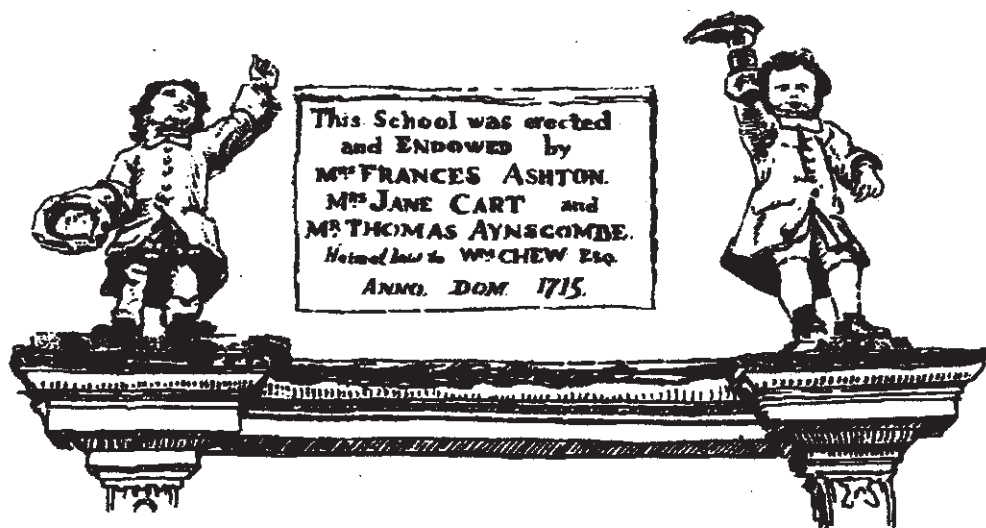
The boys were to be 7 years old, the sons of parents who were members of the Church of England and who had been in communion for two years. The master was required to take the boys to divine service at the Priory Church. If the parents refused to allow this, the boys would be expelled. The free uniform was blue and consisted of suits lined with calico, shirts of bleached linen, knitted hose and caps with scarlet bands and tassels. The school did not attract dissenters to the Church of England, rather it maintained C.of E. numbers and confirmed them in their values. The school hours in the summer were 7am to 11am and 1pm to 5pm. In the winter it opened an hour later and closed an hour earlier. The school shut in August so that the boys could earn a small amount for their families by helping to bring in the harvest.

Entry required that each boy should be able to read from the New Testament. This shows that the school was intended for the sons of what were known as 'the deserving poor'. These were hard working traders and labourers who had sufficient education or finance to be able to teach their sons to read. Some boys had their entrance delayed as their reading was not good enough. In 1775 there were nine vacancies, but only four pupils were admitted. None others qualified. Young boys were employable and potential wage earners. Sending a son to school was, therefore, a financial sacrifice. Only one boy per family was able to attend at any one time. This was a realistic rule, as no eligible family could afford to be without the income of two boys. On leaving, apprenticeships of £5 were provided. These allowed the boys to be taken on in local firms and to make the most of their education.

The 1830 Directory contains the entry 'Free School and Gent's Academy, High Street'. Between 1789 and 1880, 759 boys passed through the school. 13 died, 11 were expelled, 10 moved away, one was admitted to Christ's Hospital school in London and one joined the Wesleyan School. 245 boys left before 14, mostly to become wage earners. 133 boys stayed 7 years and 66% remained till they were 14 years old. Between 1870 and 1880 this rose to 88%. Between 1868 and 1875 20 sons of widows stayed on at the school till their 14th birthdays. This implies

that funds and bursaries must have been found for them. Of the 18 labourers' children who attended between 1736 and 1875, 5 became carpenters, 4 shoe makers, 2 tailors, 2 butchers, 1 cabinet maker, 1 blacksmith, 1 painter, 1 iron monger and 1 became a solicitor's clerk.

Other schools opened in the town during the 19th century. Among them were, the National School in 1838, the British School in 1843, the Wesleyan Day School in 1853 and the Ashton Elementary School in 1864. None of these was a threat to the Charity School, either in quality of education, the provision of free uniform, or in the provision of apprenticeships. From the mid 1860s, boys transferred from the newly opened Ashton Elementary School at age 8.



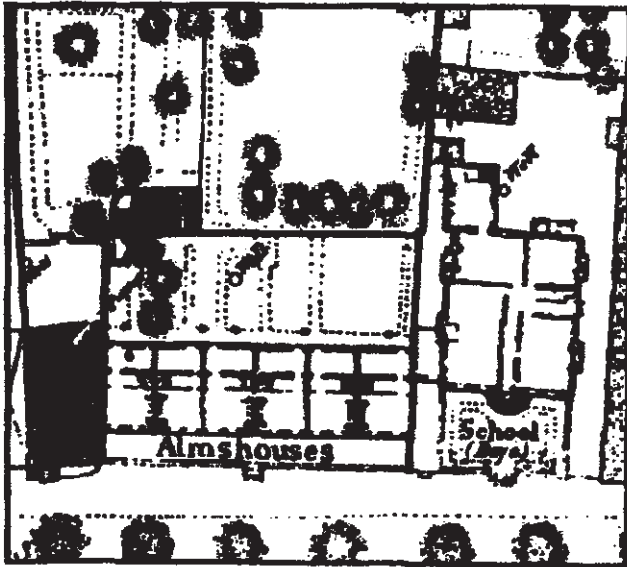
The Charity School was run by a board of Trustees who were nominally overseen by the Charity Commissioners. Up to 1880, the Trustees had a fairly free hand and seem to have run a successful and popular school. There was always a waiting list for places. Up to 1867 there were around 60 boys and the school was independent of the National Society. The Trustees, who were also the school Governors were answerable to the Priory Church annual vestry meeting.

There were seven Trustees, mostly local men, including the Rector and Dunstable businessmen and solicitors. They were untypical Trustees in that they took good care of the land investments and the school management. The trustees met at Whitsun for an annual dinner. The school's income rose and fell with farm rents. The Master's salary was £60 pa in 1823 and £150 pa in 1880. The salary was supplemented by the admission of fee-paying scholars, both boarders and day boys.

The school had 8 masters from 1715 to 1880.

1. Moses Gratwick, 1715-1741. Moses had no degree but was a 'gentleman, a man of substance.' The curriculum, which was intended to prepare the boys for apprenticeships, consisted of reading writing and keeping simple accounts. Mr. Gratwick's speciality was the teaching of Spelling and Copperplate hand-writing.
2. Rev. Thomas Hill, 1741-1753. Thomas was educated at Oxford University, was curate at the Priory from 1720 and became Rector in 1728.
3. Edward Snoxell, 1753-1780. Edward was an usher at the school under Thomas Hill. He was dismissed by the Governors for poor management. The trustees were more concerned about the perceived reputation of the school than anything Mr. Snoxell may or may not have done or said. It was also rumoured that his wife was a Non-Conformist.
4. William Ward, 1780-1789. He was appointed from 56 applicants and was known to have firm discipline.
5. John Gresham, 1789-1812 He was appointed from 48 applicants and was a renowned musician.
6. John Puddephatt, 1812-1836 He was an ex pupil of the school and served as an assistant master before his appointment. Both he and John Gresham are buried in the Priory Churchyard.
7. John Corfield, 1836-1856 He established the library and introduced book-keeping and the study of science. He taught History, Geography, Mechanics and Algebra. His curriculum also included reading, writing, spelling, dictation, grammar and arithmetic. He was the first to teach the free scholars and the fee-payers in separate classes.
8. William Hambling, 1856-1880, He trained at Cheltenham Education College, was a churchwarden at the Priory and founded the Dunstable Rifle Corps. He was Colonel of the Bedfordshire Volunteers, a Magistrate and Mayor of Dunstable 1880/2, 1887-9. He was President of the Dunstable Institute

None of the masters left for other appointments. 4 died in post, 2 retired, 1 was dismissed and the last oversaw the reorganisation of 1880.



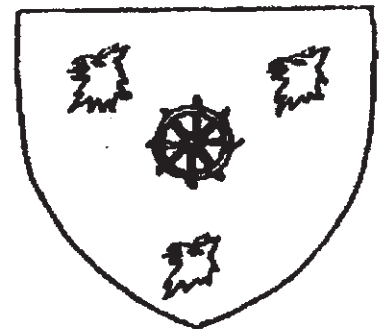
From O.S. Map 1880

Chew's Foundation School 1880 to 1905

The 1860s saw developments which were to have a huge effect on the Charity School. Dunstable Borough Council (1864), which contained members of many denominations, took an increasing interest in education in the town. The Ashton Foundation had a huge surplus of money which led to the building of the Elementary School, (Ashton St. Peter's) and later to Dunstable Grammar School. When Gladstone's Liberals won the 1868 General Election, they passed, among other laws, The Endowed Schools Act (1869) and the Education Act (1870). The former established the Endowed Schools Commissioners and the latter introduced the requirement for statutory elementary education. Both undermined the powers of the Trustees. The Commissioners investigated the school's Trustees in 1874 and put forward the first plans to

establish secondary education in Dunstable. The Elementary School was to be for girls, the Charity School for boys and the new Grammar School was to be for the secondary education of boys. The first two schools were to be inspected by the Commissioners and were to retain their C of E connections. The third was to come under Government inspection. All church funded apprenticeships were to be abolished. All the negotiations which resulted in the establishment of the Foundation School were protracted by the many bodies involved and the entrenched views of the participants. The Trustees objected to most of the proposals on the grounds that they were not in keeping with the 1724 and 1727 settlements. The next proposal was that the Grammar School should be established in the Elementary School building. This was opposed because the site was so unhealthy. The Elementary School was famous for its stench. The Grammar School should, therefore, be a new building.

Chew's Foundation School was approved by the Queen in Council on 28th June 1880, to be a Secondary School, the first one in South Bedfordshire. Most pupils were to leave at 14 but they could stay on to 15. The curriculum included the natural sciences, drill, vocal music, Latin and one modern foreign language. The establishment was for 40 free scholars and 60 fee-payers. The maximum fee for boarders was £35 pa. The free scholars, sons of poor Anglicans, received uniform, books and a deposit in a savings bank of between £2 and £4. The 12 Governors included 6 of the original Trustees and 2 Town Councillors and met twice a year. There was an annual external inspection and an audit by the Commissioners.



Chew Arms

The existing building was inadequate for its new role. Numbers 34, 35 and 36 South Street were purchased from Munt and Brown for the site of the new building. It cost £580 and was opened in 1883. It consisted of a school room and two class rooms. The new school was in trouble almost from the start. Agriculture was in decline in the 1890s and this led to a slow diminution of income, year on year. The Grammar School opened in 1888 and was able to offer a more complete curriculum. From 1891 the Elementary School solved its sanitation problems and established a good reputation for the quality of its education. The Chew's School was not popular with those of the local Councillors who were not Anglicans. William Hambling had been an excellent Master of the Charity School but did not have the skills to run a Secondary School. Throughout the 1890s, there were discussions and arguments between the Governors of the various Dunstable schools, the Commissioners, HMI, and the Town Council, as to the use of the new building. In 1894, the Town Council

suggested that the building be used as a Library, Reading Room and Evening Institute. In 1895 the Governors suggested that their school should be a girls Secondary School, but the consensus was that this would be better established in Luton. William Hambling died in 1898 and George Griffin was appointed temporary master. He was a good teacher and disciplinarian. The County Council became the LEA in May 1903 and so added another voice in the continuing discussions and disagreements about the educational requirements in Dunstable.

The Agricultural College in Ridgmont needed to expand but the Duke of Bedford would not grant permission. The LEA decided to move it to Dunstable with Rural Sciences at the Grammar School and the advanced course in the new Chew's building. As a result, the idea of a girls' school was dropped in June 1904. The Governors opposed the idea of the Agricultural College, as they had opposed every other suggestion, on the grounds that it did not comply with the settlements of 1724, 1727 or 1880.

By 1901 there were only 14 pupils on roll. By January 1905 this had fallen to 3. The only advantages of attending the Chew's School were the free uniform and the savings account. Parents were no longer willing to pay for their sons to be educated alongside free scholars when the Grammar School offered a superior curriculum. In January 1905 all parties were unanimous, for the first time ever, that the school should close at Easter 1905. The few remaining pupils were given scholarships to other schools.

This is a sad end to a school which, for most of its life, was a prized asset of the town. It provided a quality education to generations of children, many of whom remembered the school with gratitude. It raised the standard of education for a whole stratum of society, fulfilling the expectations of its founders.

This was not quite the end of education at Chew's House, though. When the Wesleyan Church burnt down in 1908, and its school with it, the boys were educated for a while in Chew's House. It is ironic that the last organised classes in this building should be for the sons of what William Chew would have regarded as 'Dissenters.'

The work of the Chew's Foundation continues to this day. Part of the settlement of 1910 says that income from investments should be spent on supporting education in Dunstable and District. The Charity School was famous for its free uniform. The Foundation is a Christian charity. It provides grants for school uniform and other educational purposes to the baptised children (boys and girls) of parents who apply to it. Current details are available from Mrs. MJ Bradley, Chew's Foundation, Grove House, 76 High Street North, Dunstable LU6 1NF, 01582 890619.

POSTCARD EXHIBITION

On Saturday 9th April Bedfordshire Local History Societies will be holding an exhibition of pre-1918 postcards of the county. Each society or organisation will display postcards (or copies of them) of their own area or sphere of interest. The exhibition will be held in the Parkside Hall, Woburn Road, Ampthill, from 10am to 4pm. Admission will be free.

The Dunstable Society will be having a stand there, so if you have any interesting postcards which you would be willing to lend for display (or allow to be copied), please get in touch with Gordon Ivinson (01582 667287) or Joan Curran (01525 221963). If you are intending to visit the display and can spare an hour to act as a steward on the Society's stand, we shall be delighted to hear from you!

ARE THERE ANY EXHIBITIONISTS OUT THERE?

Every year we receive one or two requests to take part in an exhibition of photos and other items connected with the history of our town. With the opening of Priory House there will be a need for even more displays. So far the preparation for these exhibitions has always been done by the same two or three people and we urgently need some more help. If you feel you can offer some assistance in any way - collecting material, producing captions for pictures, mounting photos, etc -

PLEASE COME AND LET ONE OF THE COMMITTEE KNOW.

The next exhibition after Ampthill will be for Dunstable's VJ Day Celebrations on the 13th & 14th August. Make a note of the date, and if you can help, please do.

The AC DELCO Facade

David Lindsey

Many of you will have read in the local papers last summer that the owners of the former TRICO site, a firm called Predables, had applied for planning permission to develop most of the site for housing similar to that on the adjacent sports ground. The developers made it clear that they had no intention of retaining the 1930's facade, this despite Local Plan requirements or an expressed desire by the planning authorities that the facade should be retained. English Heritage visited the site and decided that the facade was not worthy of listing, though admitted that the decision was a close call. The planning authorities turned down the application and so the developers appealed. A public planning inquiry was set for mid July last year.

Clause 2 of the Constitution states that the Society's object " shall be to foster interest in the history and **seek to protect** the heritage of Dunstable and surrounding villages". With this in mind, I sought and was given permission to represent the Society at the inquiry. My submission is reproduced below. The Inspector gave me a fair hearing and listened intently. His determination will not be published until 1st April.

Unfortunately, with the demise of the S.W.Beds Preservation Society and the Chiltern Society's attention drawn elsewhere, there is now no group other than ourselves watching over Dunstable's built heritage. Recently there was a letter in the "Gazette" complaining about the constant disappearance of Dunstable's old buildings, including Ashton St Peter School, and in this weeks's paper (26.1.05) doubts are cast on the future of the "Saracen's Head".

We need to be vigilant and we stand virtually alone. Sadly, Dunstable Town Council agreed with the developer that the facade was not worthy of being saved.

PUBLIC ENQUIRY : REDEVELOPMENT OF THE TRICO FACTORY SITE : 13-15 July 2004
SUBMISSION by DAVID LINDSEY
ON BEHALF OF THE DUNSTABLE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

RETENTION OF THE AC-DELCO FACADE

1. Over the past 50 years Dunstable has lost much of its built heritage and cannot afford to lose more. To do so would jeopardise its identity.
2. The facade was built in a neo-classical / Art Deco style typical of industrial developments in the 1930s. This style is now rarely found in this part of Bedfordshire. It is therefore of no little architectural significance and for this reason alone merits retention.

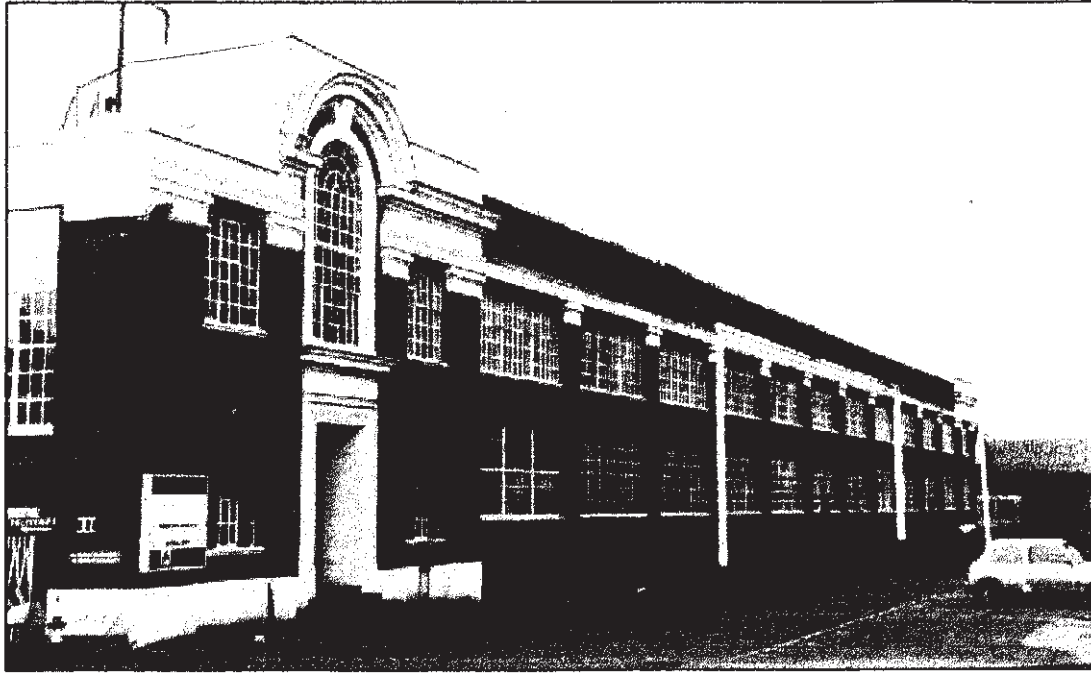


Photo C. Rotcontix

3. Its elegance and clean bright lines have an enhancing effect on the street scene which would otherwise be nondescript.

4. During its 70 year life, the factory has been one of the town's larger employers. It established a prominent presence in the local scene - sports, social club, house magazine, dramatic club etc. Most employees enjoyed working at the factory and now have fond memories of it. The facade has come to symbolise these memories. To destroy it would remove a tangible link to their past. It is therefore of considerable local interest

5. LOCAL PLAN POLICY BE8 (i) states that "Proposals for Development...should ensure that any ...built features which are an attractive aspect of the site, are protected and conserved".

6. The Society contends that to demolish the facade would not be in accord with this approved Policy.

7. The fact that the facade has not been listed does not effect the issue, although listing would have strengthened our case. We understand however that the decision not to list was a close call, so clearly it must have some real merit.

8. The facade with its frontage on the A5 occupies a highly prominent position at the entrance to the town. It would offer a not to be missed opportunity to create a striking and welcoming 'Gateway' to those entering the town from the north as well as improving urban quality of the area and the general appearance of the site. If the facade were removed, the alternative would be houses right up to the highway (as is the case with the new development to the north) which would present an appearance of urban sprawl.

9. LOCAL PLAN POLICY BE8 (ii) states that "Proposals for Development should take full account of the need for, or the opportunities to enhance or reinforce the character and local distinctiveness of the area." The PLAN's rationale for this Policy is well set out in paragraph 4.64: 'Local Distinctiveness' on page 58.

10. The Society contends that to demolish the facade would also not be in accord with this approved Policy.

11. It might be argued that it is not a feasible proposition to retain the facade and incorporate it within any new development.

We strongly contest this. There are many examples of very successful 'conversions'. Only a short distance down High Street North towards the town are the new Social Services offices created behind the old post office facade. Others are the Tesco supermarket behind the old Courtauld's rayon factory facade; Morrison's supermarket hiding in the old Hilsborough Barracks in Sheffield. We suggest the Trico facade could be similarly utilised to front multi-storey housing for the elderly or low cost housing. "Where there's a will there's a way" maxim applies.

12. CONCLUSION. In view of the above we are of the opinion that demolition of the facade cannot be justified, an act which would be considered by many Dunstablians to be tantamount to vandalism.

The Society requests therefore that, in any planning permission granted for any type of development, a Condition be included requiring the facade to be retained and re-utilised in accordance with Policies BE8 (i) and (ii) of the recently adopted Local Plan.

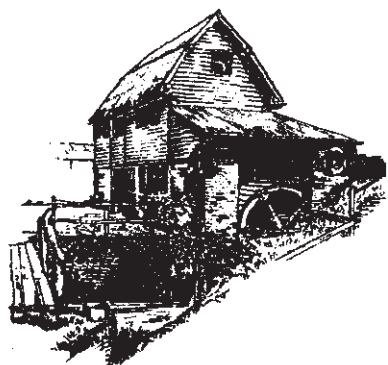
Bedfordshire Libraries now has it's own **web site at www.bedfordshire.gov.uk**, click on **Libraries**. Of particular interest to local and family historians will be the 'local studies and family history section. Here you will find :

- ◆ An 'A-Z' listing, with a description, of local / family history items held in Bedfordshire libraries.
- ◆ A 'By Library' list of all the holdings of each library.
- ◆ A wealth of 'Digitised Resources' such as articles (some by members of the Dunstable & District Local History Society), photos and timelines arranged by 'Place', 'People' and 'Resources'.
- ◆ The 'Gateway to the Internet' which takes you to useful and authoritative local/family history web sites.
- ◆ 'What's New?' to keep you up-to-date with additions to the web pages and to library stock.

On each web page, there is a 'Contact us' option. Please feel free to send comments or to ask us a question.

Christine Conboy - Dunstable Library

FORD END WATERMILL - IVINGHOE



**Opening times -
2005**

Milling on dates marked * between 3 and 5 approx. When stone ground whole-meal flour will be on sale.

Ample car parking.
No toilet facilities.

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| * 28 March | Easter Monday Bank Holiday |
| * 2 May | Bank Holiday Monday |
| 8 May | Sunday - National Mills Day |
| * 22 May | Sunday |
| * 30 May | Spring Bank Holiday Monday |
| 12 June | Sunday |
| 26 June | Sunday |
| 10 July | Sunday |
| 24 July | Sunday |
| 14 July | Sunday |
| 28 August | Sunday |
| * 29 August | Bank Holiday Monday |
| 11 September | Sunday — National Heritage Day |
| * 25 September | Sunday |

Articles published in the Newsletter cannot be reproduced without permission of the editor **Omer Roucoux**

The May meeting of the Society will take place in the Methodist Church Hall Entrance opposite Wilkinson's at 7.45 on 9th May

Gordon Abbott will talk about **The EVACUEES during WW II**

(Note that this is the second Monday in May)

