

# Newsletter

*Dunstable & District  
Local History Society*

N°28

August 2007



## *The New Chairman's Notes*

Since I became chairman I've been learning about so many things in the society which don't just happen by magic. They're the result of someone's extra effort and work.

For instance, those attractive posters which advertise our meetings are produced on his computer by Omer Roucoux and taken to various sites around the town by Hugh Garrod. Ron Frith ensures that the microphones are ready and suitable for our speakers. Gordon Ivinson has been very busy arranging our outings and Cynthia Turvey keeps track of the costs involved. Hugh Garrod, Joan Curran, Rita Swift and many others are spending many hours in the research room at Priory House arranging masses of material into some sort of order and answering the history queries which are sent to us. Let me mention especially Pat Bird, Cynthia and Trevor Turvey, Alan Sinfield, Bob Hawkes and Gordon and Sheila Ivinson. David Turner volunteered his skills as a graphic designer to add an extra professional finish to the displays for the town's 900th anniversary. The panels produced by David and Joan (and printed by Chiltern Displays) were later much admired at the Bedfordshire Local History Association's conference at Houghton Conquest. Joan and Rita spent a lot of time finding a suitable map cabinet to house the large documents preserved at Priory House. Their next (major) task was to encourage the deliverymen to somehow transport it up the stairs and through the narrow entrances of the research room!

The society has acquired a projector which can be connected to a computer for power-point presen-

tations - some of you may have seen it being used for the first time at Tudor Day to provide a slide show of some of our old photographs.

Your committee wrote to Richard Walden on his retirement as Dunstable's town clerk to thank him for all the help he has given to the society over the years. As a token of our appreciation he and Mrs Walden have been made honorary life members of the society. Your committee also agreed unanimously to invite Bernard Stevens to become our Vice President, a position last held by the late John Lunn.

My son Mark has volunteered his expertise to set up a web site for the society and work on this is proceeding very rapidly. It will make many of the special articles from our newsletter, edited so ably by Omer Roucoux, available to a worldwide audience as well as photos and information about the society.

The archives and regalia of Dunstable Chamber of Trade, which disbanded this year, are being donated to the society for display at Priory House. As part of this we will soon be asking members for their memories of the Chamber's past presidents, many of whom were so well-known and influential in the town.

Finally, some members have suggested that they would prefer some of our summer outings to take place on weekdays rather than Saturdays. Midweek outings are often easier and cheaper to arrange but we all have different work and family commitments. If you have a view on this, please tell Gordon or myself.

*John Buckledee*

### **HOW TO READ OLD WILLS & TITLE DEEDS**

Have you ever found an old will when doing your family history and been unable to read it? If so, then there is a course for you on Saturday 6th October. Two experts from the County Record Office, Kevin Ward and James Collett-White, will be leading a session on deciphering old documents, with some practical exercises. (Don't be alarmed, there will be lots of help.) The session will be at Great Barford Village Hall, just off the Bedford by-pass, and will be from 9.30am to 1.30pm. Coffee will be served at intervals and packed lunches may be taken for an informal session between 1.00 and 1.30. The cost is £8 and the closing date for applications is 30th September. If you are interested, please see Joan Curran. (Places will be limited.)

## Members' memories : The Old Palace Cinema & Theatre

History society members have a host of memories of bygone Dunstable which ought to be written down before they are forgotten.

So here is the second in a series of anecdotes told to John Buckledee.

If you have similar tales to tell, John will be happy to come to see you. Just leave a message on his answerphone on 01582 703107.

Local amateur actors and singers presented some elaborate shows at the old Palace cinema and theatre, which stood in High Street North next to what is now Cubes nightclub. But the backstage facilities there were very limited.

For instance, there was no space for changing rooms even though the spectacular operettas of the time required a large and gorgeously dressed cast.

**Don Maskell**, of Kingsbury Court, Dunstable, tells how this particular problem was solved. A large tent would be erected in the front garden of The Lawn, the picturesque old house which stood next to Grove House, on the other side of the road to the theatre.

The actors changed there, and rushed across the high street ready for their appearance on stage.

One particular show, *The Maid of the Mountains*, required the cast to descend a hillside path. Don says the access to this was provided by scaffolding specially erected outside the theatre.

**Douglas Darby**, of West Street, remembers that the Palace put on an *In Town Tonight* show just before the war. Various local people performed in between two short film shows. They included Rodney Sewell, an accomplished pianist who ran the Electrolux Concert Party, dancer Rene Kibble (who was the daughter of the licensee of the Royal Oak), and guitarist Ron Mannering, whose father ran the Temperance Hotel in West Street.

Douglas was playing the mandolin at that time and he and Ron performed the tune *The Music Goes Round And Round* as a mandolin-guitar duet.

Douglas's father Horace, a bass baritone, performed a number of times at the Palace in operatic society shows like *The Geisha*, *Tom Jones* and *Merrie England*. The comedy parts were always taken by Charlie Hinton, who was a dentist. When they did the pantomime *Dick Whittington*, Charlie played the cat and roamed all around the audience, even up into the balcony and along the parapet. They were very frightened for him – if anyone had pushed him he would

have fallen into the stalls. But there were no accidents and the routine was a big success.

Like Don Maskell, Douglas emphasises that there was very little room backstage at the Palace although the front of house was very ornate. Douglas remembers going behind the stage when the cinema screen was up and seeing the film image backwards.

Don's mother Connie Maskell (nee Burnham) and his aunts and uncles were very much part of the pre-war shows at the Palace. He has some delightful photos of his aunt Grace Bushby in costume for Palace musicals (photo below), taken by Dunstable photographer Chas Smy whose studio was at 110 High Street North (near George Street).



Don appeared in a production of *San Marino* in the old Dunstable Town Hall, when he was a schoolboy. The musical director was Hedley Mannering, manager of the Temperance Hotel.

In 1963 Don was a member of the cast of *Trial By Jury*, produced by the Rev Rupert Childs at the town hall as part of the entertainment at the Priory Church's New Year dinner. This production led to the formation of the present Dunstable Amateur

Operatic Society which presented *The Pirates of Penzance* the following year.

The reference in the last newsletter to a Mr Brown, who provided a pioneering wireless set at the Royal Oak in Church Street, prompted a call from history society member **John Fendley**, now of Cirencester. Mr Fendley says that this must have been the John Brown who was, in fact, the Royal Oak's licensee – remembered for having his name frosted on the pub's glasses so customers would not steal them. Mr Brown's father was related by marriage to Mr Fendley's great-grandfather and Mr Fendley's mother would stay at the Royal Oak when visiting Dunstable in the early 1920s.

Young John Fendley became a pupil at Britain Street School when his father, who worked for the railway, was transferred to this area. Later John attended Ashton primary school in Church Street when the headmistress was Miss Mapley.

The Station Methodist Chapel adjoined Bennett's Brewery, which stood in High Street North on the corner of Chiltern Road.

**Fred Moore** and **Bernard Stevens** recall that when the brewery wanted to expand, the chapel would only agree to sell if the brewery promised not to brew intoxicating liquor in its additional site. Hence, this became Bennett's lemonade factory. The Waterlow Road Methodist Chapel was built in 1905 to replace the Station Chapel.

*John Buckledee*

### Mayors Of Dunstable

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| <p>39. Edwin TIMMS 1929 – 1930<br/> 40. George William SIMMONDS 1930 – 1931<br/> 41. Alfred COOK 1932 – 1936<br/> 42. Frank KENWORTHY 1936 – 1937<br/> 43. Frederick George KEEP 1937 – 1940<br/> 44. Arthur Edwin SHARMAN 1940 – 1943<br/> 45. Harold William PARROTT 1943 – 1946<br/> 46. Albert William BANKS November 1946 – May 1949<br/> 47. Thomas SANDLAND June 1949 – 1952<br/> 48. Benjamin James SCOTT 1952 – 1954<br/> 49. Walter Howard ROBINSON 1954 – 1956<br/> 50. Wilfred Thomas LACK OBE 1956 – 1959<br/> 51. Louis PALMER 1959 – 1961<br/> 52. Percy James MELTON 1961 – 1962<br/> 53. Haydn William PARROTT 1962 – 1963 (son of 45)<br/> 54. Michael Leopold KILBY 1963 – 1964<br/> 55. Leslie Charles WORBY 1964 – 1965<br/> 56. Walter CREASEY 1965 – 1966<br/> 57. Charles William Arthur CONWAY 1966 – 1967<br/> 58. William ALLEN 1967 – 1968<br/> 59. Percy Neil WAINWRIGHT 1968 – 1969<br/> 60. Ronald WYLES 1969 – 1970<br/> 61. Leslie Murray MAIR 1970 – 1971<br/> 62. Eric Leonard ROYCE 1971 – 1973<br/> 63. William Eric FARBON 1973 – 1974<br/> 64. Edward Stewart CLARK 1974 - 1975<br/> 65. Edith Brownlie POCKNELL 1975 - 1976<br/> 66. Samuel John George MOLYNEAUX 1976 - 1977<br/> 67. William Barratt RYCROFT 1977 - 1978<br/> 68. Peter John NEWTON (1) 1978 - 1979<br/> 69. Clifford John CLARK 1979 - 1980<br/> 70. William ALLEN (1) 1980 – 1981<br/> Peter John NEWTON (2) 1981 - 1982<br/> 71. Stuart Charles BRETT 1982 - 1983</p> | <p>72. James R McALLISTER 1983 - 1984<br/> William ALLEN (2) 1984 - 1985<br/> 73. Nicholas Peter GOODMAN 1985 - 1986<br/> 74. Ahmet Asim Bilgin MUSANNIF 1986 - 1987<br/> 75. Wendy Ann MILLS 1987 - 1988<br/> 76. Brenda Madge BOATWRIGHT (1) 1988 - 1989<br/> 77. Kenneth Spencer BISWELL 1989 – 1990<br/> 78. Michael TILLEY 1990 – 1991<br/> 79. Paul Power BARTER 1991 – 1992<br/> 80. Doreen McLACHLAN 1992 – 1993<br/> 81. Edith Joan GOODALL 1993 – 1994<br/> 82. Peter James BOATWRIGHT 1994 – 1995 husband of 76<br/> 83. Reginald Leslie FOSSEY 1995 – 1997<br/> 84. Sylvia Barbara POWDRILL 1997 – 1998<br/> 85. Brian John TWYFORD 1998 – 1999<br/> 86. Anthony HAWKINS 1999 – 2000<br/> 87. Sally Anne NEWTON 2000 – 2001<br/> daughter of 64, wife of 68<br/> 88. Mary Ann Florence BISWELL 2001 – 2002 widow of 77<br/> 89. Terence Colin COLBOURNE 2002 – 2003<br/> 90. Ratan Rustomji ANKLESARIA 2003 – 2004<br/> 91. Jennifer Kay FAIRBAIRN 2004 – 2005<br/> 92. Andrew John FAIRBAIRN 2005 – 2006 husband of 91<br/> 93. Cynthia Mary GRESHAM 2006 – 2007<br/> 94. Brenda Madge BOATWRIGHT (2) 2007 - 2008</p> |
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This list is continued from the one published in the August 2006 Newsletter. It is as complete as I can make it.

The only initial which eludes me is the R in number 72,  
James R. McAllister. – Any offers?

*Hugh Garrod*



# CHURCHYARDS SURVEY

In 1907 Arthur Weight Matthews started his surveying of the churchyards in Dunstable. He was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1865, at 14 East Street, Bridport in Dorset. His father was a watch-maker and jeweller from Birmingham, William Laugher Matthews (1836-1898). His mother was Ann, nee Weight from Newnham in Gloucestershire (1830-1872). Arthur was the oldest of four boys, the others being Henry, Frederick and William. He was only seven years old when his mother died. At the time of the 1891 and 1901 Census returns, Arthur was lodging in north London. His profession is given as engraver. Arthur was married on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1917 to Jane Elizabeth Pemberton of Newbury, Berkshire, at the Congregational Church, Herne Bay in Kent.

He joined the Society of Genealogists as a Corresponding Associate in 1912; his subscription lapsed in 1934. He lived in Herne Bay from at least 1924 until his death on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1937. Elizabeth died in 1940. They had no children.

He surveyed about 80 Bedfordshire churchyards between 1907 and 1916. Most of this time he lived at 60 Rothesay Road, Luton. Matthews recorded 430 names in Dunstable, 250 by the Priory, 90 by West Street Baptists, 17 in the Wesleyan burial

ground and 73 in the Old Baptist ground. All these burial grounds were closed in 1860, when the town cemetery was opened in West Street. No further burials were allowed except in family plots. The last two burials in any of these grounds were William Little Burr in 1930 and his brother Edward Thomas in 1933. Both these burials were in the Priory churchyard. Most inscriptions on the gravestones in Priory churchyard are west facing and therefore face into the prevailing weather. I did a survey of the Priory churchyard in 2001 and found 38 stones, containing 93 names, which were still legible. All the rest were either missing, broken, face down or too weathered to read. Since then even more stones have been broken or have fallen down.

Arthur Matthews also recorded 66 names at Totternhoe Church, 59 at Tilsworth, 48 at Studham, 77 at Eaton Bray and over 120 at Houghton Regis. There is no record for Stanbridge or Kensworth.

The whole of the Arthur Weight Matthews record for Bedfordshire is available in the Bedford Archive (BLARS). I will make available a copy of the Dunstable material in our room in Priory House. I am indebted to Nigel Lutt of BLARS and the Ancestry website for the biographical details of AWM and his family.

*Hugh Garrod.*

'At the age of thirty-eight, he (Sam Whitbread I) married Harriot Hayton or Haydon of Ivinghoe, who bore him two daughters and a son, before dying in 1764. In her memory, Samuel founded a Charity School for girls in London, with a quaint stipulation that green and white straw hats from Dunstable should be bought for them annually.'

from *'Plain Mr. Whitbread'* by Sam Whitbread. Bookcastle 2007



Would you like to get involved in a project to research famous people and places associated with them in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty? We are looking for volunteers who can give a few hours, or a few days, to research and produce profiles of famous authors, artists and figures from history connected with the Chilterns. These will go on a new section of the Chilterns AONB website [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

The aim of the project is to highlight the wealth of history and culture in this beautiful area. The information we publish will promote places to visit and things to do to help people make the most of what's on the doorstep.

# The Caddington Church Palindrome

Omer Roucoux

At the March Society meeting Mr Oliver mentioned "a palindrome which could be seen on the font of Caddington Church". My curiosity was immediately aroused and I wanted to know more.

A palindrome is a sentence which reads the same forward and backwards, such as the presumed first words of Adam to Eve "Madam, I'm Adam".

The first problem was to be able to see it, as the church is closed most of the time. Then to find the font, because the words are not on the font but on a shallow bowl which is kept inside the font.

It is quite heavy but transportable, made of white marble and is 23.5cm in diameter and of 11cm in height. The inscription runs around its upper border. The text says, without gaps between the words :

NIYON ANOMHMA MH MONAN OYIN.

This can be translated in various ways, for example in the most literal fashion :

*Cleanse transgression, not only looks*

Or in a more meaningful way

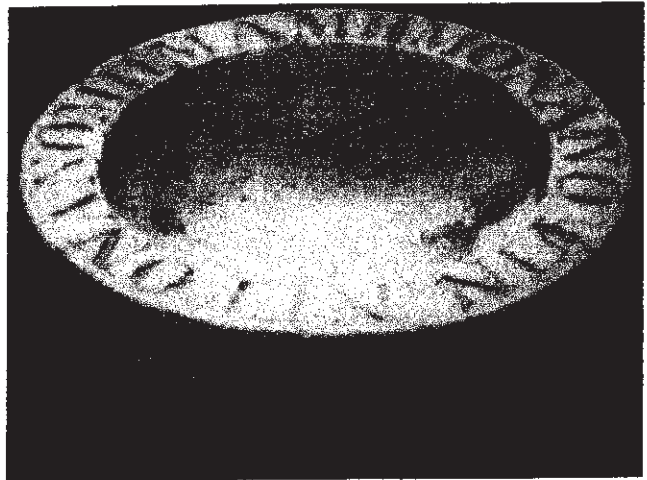
*Wash your sin not just your face.*

Or *Cleanse our sin not only our face .*

This text is inscribed on the *phiale* or fountain of purification, in the courtyard of the *Hagia Sophia* in Constantinople (Istanbul). (By the way *Hagia Sophia* does not mean *Saint Sophie*, as it is often assumed, but *Holy Wisdom* !). It was placed there at the time of the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI the Wise (866-912). The invention of this type of text is commonly attributed to Sotades, a poet from the 3rd century B.C. But he is probably not the author of this religious sounding text.

Our palindrome was very popular and the allusion to *cleansing the sins* relates it immediately to the Christian baptism. From the middle ages it was inscribed in many fonts, for example in Paris in the Church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, and in England on those of St Martin (Ludgate - London), Sandbach, Harlow, Melton Mowbray, Hadley, Hingham, Knapton, Rufford and others. Some of these have now disappeared but in general they seem to have been installed by scholarly rectors in the 17th century.

The Caddington basin was very likely placed in the church by John Biby, a scholar and schoolmaster, who was vicar from 1703 to 1720. He kept a private school for a dozen boys residing in the vicarage \*.



There is no tradition explaining where the item came from but some young British upper class men started travelling abroad during the 17th century on an educational trip called the *Grand Tour*. This could last from several months to several years. Many brought back from Greece, Egypt and the Near East souvenirs to decorate their mansions and parks. The Caddington bowl could well have come into this country as such a souvenir, not necessarily to be used as a font but as a wash basin.



My thanks for the help and information from Peter Graham from the Caddington Local History Group and the present vicar Rev. Ruth Pyke.

\* More details about the Rev. John Biby can be found in *Notes on Caddington Church* by Horace Montagu Prescott. Leagrave Press, Luton 1937. p.48.

# DUNSTABLE MARKET without the Priory

Omer Roucoux

## After the dissolution of the Priory

Dunstable Priory was one of the last to be dissolved. The process of confiscation of the religious properties which started in 1536 allowed Henry VIII to refill the royal treasury. The properties were given to various favourites of the king. Gervase Markham, elected prior of Dunstable Priory in 1525, was obliged to surrender his house in December 1539. In 1545 Richard Greenway was made keeper of the mansion, chief of the lands and gardens.

The dissolution of the priory meant the complete loss of privileges enjoyed by the townsmen under the prior's jurisdiction. The king who took his place as lord of the borough had nothing to gain by jealously guarding its administrative independence.

The burgesses might have forced the king to leave them some self-government at the beginning, but their hope of keeping some independence was frustrated when Dunstable was annexed, together with other Crown lands in Bedford, to the honour of Ampthill in 1542. Its status of 'borough' was replaced by that of 'manor', attached to the royal manor of Ampthill to which the inhabitants owed service. The townspeople became tenants of the Crown, all the taxes and fines, tolls of markets and fairs, legislation on beer and bread, and other privileges exercised by the prior became the right of the bailiff. This was a man, appointed by the king, who acquired the lease of office for a variable number of years. We can get an idea of the profitability of the post when we know that it was leased in 1605 for 40 years at annual rent of £9.18s.8d., but in 1649 was said to be worth £24 a year, exclusive of various other privileges valued at more than £12 yearly.

The day to day management of a franchise market such as Dunstable naturally included the settlement of trading disputes, and these would have been dealt with by what came to be popularly known as *Pie Powder Court*. This was a temporary law court called in an emergency to sort out disputes which happened during the day. The name of that court comes from the French *pieds poudreux* (dusty feet) as it was a court for fairgoers and tradesmen who came in hot and dusty conditions sometimes from far away. In general the problems encountered seem to have been the same as those of the Middle Ages — the use of wrong weights and measures, the disturbance caused by the market and the arrival of

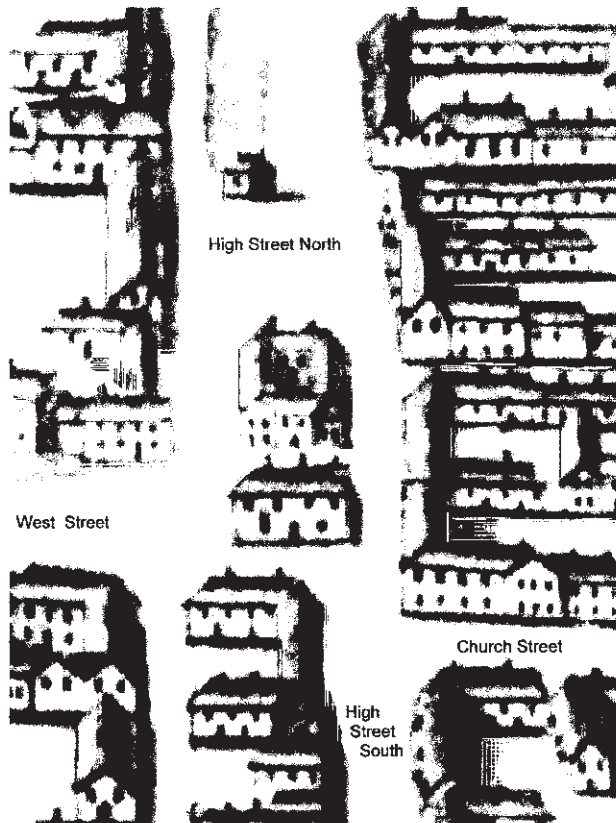
newcomers who had not paid for the right to be there. The regular stall holders had dug themselves in, with probably some customary rights to make use of a particular pitch. This is shown by a ruling from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century which declares *'that every person who shall set out a stall in the Market or Fair held in this town or a any other time or places within this Manor and have not been accustomed to do so for 40 years past shall therefore forfeit and pay to the Lord 10 shillings'*

The ownership of the manor passed to various families during the next two centuries. We can mention the Bruces, Earls of Aylesbury, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. An agreement dated from December 1738 between Lord Bruce and John, Duke of Bedford of his leasehold estate (99 years) refers to the site of the old market (in the middle of High Street North) as being part of the waste of the Manor Royal. In January 1771 the Duke of Bedford obtained a lease of the manor for three lives (99 years) which was renewed to Gertrude, Duchess of Bedford, in 1773.

In 1801 the *Dunstable Road Act* authorised the Turnpike Trustees to demolish the *Old Market House* and to remove the material on condition that they erected another Market House as near to the old site as possible. This Old Market House was situated in the middle of High Street North, near the crossroads. It was a part of Cooke's Row, which was erected in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the equivalent of Middle Row in High Street South. The new Market House was erected in 1805 on the site of the present *Abbey*, just next to the old *Anchor Gateway*.

This *Old Market House* is clearly seen on the so called "*Duke of Bedford's Map*". Surveyed by T. Bateman in 1762 (deposited in Bedford County Records Office), it is square and about 2m on each side. From top to bottom, it covers Houghton Regis down to Dunstable centre. The scale is approximately 12,500 : 1. The section showing Dunstable centre is on the right, approximately three times its original size (the names of the streets have been added).





## Dunstable Borough

The ownership of the Manor of Dunstable returned to the Crown in 1839. A judgment of 1855 is worth mentioning (*AG v Barker*). It held that the streets of the Manor of Dunstable, including the old market strip between West Street and Albion Street, were part of the Manor and the ground remained in the Crown as Lord of the Manor.

Eventually the Manor of Dunstable recovered its ancient status of Borough in 1864, with the charter of Queen Victoria. This charter of incorporation vested the government of the town in a mayor, four aldermen and twelve councilors, one-third of whom retire annually.



The first municipal elections for the Borough Council took place in 1865; in the same year the commission of the Peace was issued and the first JPs appointed. The following year the Borough Police were established.

One of the new Council's first actions was to buy the Market House from the Crown for Council Meetings and a Police Court (Magistrates' Court) in 1866

Three years later a clock tower was erected on the building and in 1872, a corn exchange and a plait hall were established in the Town Hall in the Anchor Yard. Most of this Town Hall was burned down in 1879, and a second one was built on the same site, using the original facade. It opened in 1880 and was pulled down in 1966.

In 1867 an agreement (indenture) is passed "*between the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty (Victoria) of the first part, the Honorable Charles Alexander Gore a commissioner of Her Majesty's Woods Forests and Land Revenues in charge of the Land Revenues of the Crown in the County of Bedford of the second part, and David Scott of Dunstable, butcher of the third part, witness that, in consideration of the yearly rent hereafter reserved..*" A very long text which simply means that, from this date, David Scott can collect the tolls of fairs and markets held within the Manor Royal of Dunstable for a term of 10 years and, for this privilege, he will have to pay a yearly sum of £70 in four instalments.

In 1870, the Corporation purchased the Manor and Market subject to the lease dated 1867 with David Scott, for the sum of £150. The same year the Crown transferred the land of the Manor Royal to the Mayor and gives an interesting list of exceptions of privately owned properties through the town.

In 1871 Charles Benning, solicitor acting as agent to the Mayor, purchased from David Scott the stalls, hurdles and other articles he had been using in connection with the market since 1867.

*To be followed*

*The Dunstable Straw Plait Market in 1861. This engraving was published in the magazine "The Queen". The left and centre buildings are the pub 'The Nag's Head', at the corner of West Street and High Street North. On the extreme right hand side of the drawing one can see the front columns of the Town Hall. The cross roads was completely blocked. to traffic.*

# WINDMILL FOR SALE

In January 1874 Mr. W. H. Derbyshire held an auction at 6 o'clock in the *Red Lion Hotel*. Some of the property belonged to the late **Mr. Joseph Freeman** and the items were described in the *Dunstable Borough Gazette* as follows:-

**"PROPERTY** - Comprising of the Substantial Freehold Brick and Timber Built 4-Storey **CORN WINDMILL**, with Two Patent and Two Common Sails, driving two pairs of French Stones, (one pair 4ft. 9in. and other pair 4ft. 6in.), and one pair of 4ft. Peak ditto, with Flour Dressing Machine, Hoppers and Tackle, Bins, and all other requisite fittings.

Also a strongly built Brick and Slated Freehold 3-Storey **STEAM CORN MILL**, with a 10-horse power high-pressure Steam Engine, Boiler and Engine House, 16-horse power Cornish Boiler, Water Tank, Coal Vaults, driving three pairs 4ft. French Stones, with Hoppers and Tackle complete. Also the Flour Dressing Machinery, Store Rooms, Bins and all other requisite fittings of a Corn Mill, with a well built Circular Chimney about 50ft. high; together also with Four-and-a-half Acres of highly productive **FREEHOLD ARABLE LAND**, with a 30ft. Public Road leading thereto, the whole being in the occupation of **\*Mr. Alfred John Smith** and situated close to the populous Village of Houghton Regis, Beds, the same being bounded on all sides by the estate of the late **H. Brandreth, Esq.**, and within half-a-mile of the London and North-Western Station at Dunstable.

Plus the Brick-built and Slated **DWELLING HOUSE**, Butcher's Shop, Cottage, Bake-House, with oven and fittings therein, Slaughter-house, Barns, Yard, Garden and valuable Paddock at the rear, situated in the High-street, Houghton Regis now occupied by **Mr. John Pratt**, butcher, and others. The last mentioned property forming a very complete Estate (Copyhold of the Manor of Houghton Regis)"

*Photo taken before 1920 from the top of the chalk cutting. About the centre is Houghton Regis church, on the left the windmill and on the right the old Baptist Church*



However Mr. Derbyshire was well known for his love of words and took this opportunity to wax lyrical about his favourite area. Again it is reproduced as reported in the *Gazette* providing a glimpse of a Dunstable and a calmer age now lost.

"Mr Derbyshire remarked that in selecting a suitable site for a windmill there were several considerations to be looked at. In the first place, it must be so situate that it would catch the slightest breeze in summer, and in such a position that it could not be harmed in the strongest gale in the winter. He was happy to say that the mill he was offering had both of these characteristics for being in such an elevated position even a zephyr was converted into a stiff breeze, and when through the winter months, those heavy gales blew up from Hockliffe the surrounding country was so formed that the *Chalk Hill Cutting* turned the course of the wind and instead of turning aside towards the Houghton mills, it came through the cutting straight on to Dunstable. (*Loud laughter*). He had often noticed too, when taking a stroll upon Dunstable Downs on a calm summer evening, looking towards Eaton Bray, he could see the **Doolittle Mill** was becalmed, **Mr. Simmond's** and **Mr. Hawkins' Mills** were lazily moving, but when he turned towards **Houghton Mill** he saw the sails spinning round, and the mill appeared a monument of industry and the abode of native innocence. (*Laughter*). It was a serious question about the high price of coal, but if coal was dear then wind was cheap, it would defy the ingenuity even of a Robert Lowe to invent a gauge in order to tax the wind. Having thus wittily described the lot, he invited the company to give him a start, **Mr. Thorne** offered £800; **Mr. Cook**, £1,000; and then it was carried up in sums of £10 and £20; £1,200 was the bid of **\*Mr. Smith, the tenant**, and at that sum was declared to be the purchaser.

Lot 2 consisting of dwelling house, butcher's shop, parlour, sitting room, kitchen and 4 bedrooms and a dwelling house at the rear was secured by **Mr. John Cooper** of Houghton for £310.

Mr. Derbyshire was in his best form and all passed off well."

*Rita Swift*