

NEWSLETTER

Dunstable & District Local History Society
No. 29 February 2008



Chairman's Notes January 2008

WE were all very sorry to hear that Omer Roucoux has decided to give up his editorship of this newsletter because of problems with his sight.

Omer has been in charge of the publication since its inception and, as the years have passed, it has become increasingly impressive. A complete assembly of newsletters is now an invaluable part of Dunstable's history bookshelves and Omer's regularly updated index is proving enormously useful.

Omer has now donated many of his research notes, photographs and publications to the history society's collection at Priory House. These include some valuable reference books and some unique items, such as a volume of beautiful photographs and transcriptions of the Luton Fraternity Register which he assembled with the late John Lunn. We are very grateful for these generous gifts.

I am pleased to report that David Turner has agreed to produce the newsletter for at least the next few issues. He will be bringing to it the particular benefits of his skill as a graphic designer which we all appreciated when, with Joan Curran, he created the impressive history panels for display at Priory House. As always, contributions of articles to the newsletter will be very much welcomed.

DUNSTABLE MUSEUM TRUST

Dunstable Museum Trust, once so very active in the town, decided last year to wind up and donate its funds and collections to the history society. The money will be used to provide additional display cabinets at Priory House. We already have some money donated by Dunstable Chamber of Trade for a similar purpose, and we are awaiting guidance from the Priory House manager about exactly what should be purchased, taking into account other rearrangements planned for the building.

In the meantime, one of the most interesting of the gifts from the Museum Trust is a collection of 35mm photo negatives which include a record of the demolition of areas of Church Street, Ashton Street, High Street North and the Square.

These have all been computer scanned with the generous help of David Ainsbury, of The Dunstable Gazette, and have been captioned and assembled in alphabetical order on our growing data base at Priory House. In return, we have been providing some of the photos, with captions, for use in the Yesteryear series in the Gazette.

Hugh Garrod has been busy scanning slides provided by Vivienne Evans and Omer Roucoux into the computer as well as assembling

an alphabetical list of former Dunstable inhabitants as recorded in the old street directories in our collection. Cynthia Turvey and Gordon Ivinson have been completing the transcription of Ashton St Peter's School registers and Pat Bird has been cataloguing our publications and manuscripts. The Priory House computer is always busy!

One result of the Chamber of Trade's donation is that we are trying to add a few biographical details to the list of Chamber Presidents whose names appear on its chain of office. Philip Buckle has offered to do some research on this and, as a former Chamber President himself, who could be better?

The presence of the blood transfusion service at the Methodist Church hall during some of our Tuesday night talks has added to the excitement for those of us trying to organise the meetings. The whole building has been buzzing with activity, with history society members assembling in the church, guides and brownies in two of the halls, another being used as a blood donors' waiting room and the beds and nurses in another. I heard the ladies who organise our tea and biscuits explaining to others trying to use the kitchen that they were members of the "hysterical society", some of whom had become lost in the church's maze of corridors. And just when we thought it was all over, someone arrived to prepare the hall for the bric-a-brac market the following morning. Who says that nothing happens in Dunstable on Tuesday evenings?

CHRISTMAS MEETING

The Christmas meeting seemed to be a great success, with John Smith providing an appropriately seasonal talk about mechanical music and the refreshments provided by all our volunteers being much appreciated. Joan Curran had the idea of providing buffet tables in all four corners of the hall, to avoid queuing. The simple solutions are always the best!

ORIGIN OF THE NAME DUNSTABLE

History society members have doubtless been particularly fascinated by the many learned articles about the origin of the name "Dunstable", ranging from Worthington Smith's theory about Dunna's ownership pillar to translations referring to "the market place on the hill". But Rob Brydon, on the radio programme "I'm Sorry, I Haven't A Clue" had a more amusing explanation. His suggestion was: "Completed shaving". It could soon be the town's t-shirt motto.

John Buckledee

DUNSTABLE RESIDENTS 1900 TO 1919



In Priory House, we have an assortment of directories. Some are titled Dunstable Year Book and Directory.

These first appeared in 1905 and are 'Printed by Miles Taylor, Gazette Office'. Some are called *James Tibbett's Annual Almanack and Local Directory*. These were first published in 1873. Others are *Kelly's Directories* for Bedfordshire. Between the three sources, we have directories for 1900, 1903, 1906, 1909 to 1916 and 1919. These were the ones I used in this research. There are 20,171 entries, which would print out at just over 336 pages of A4. I would be interested to hear from any one who has directories for the missing years. The Kelly's lists may not be as complete as those in the other directories. The 1906 directory lists residents in alphabetical order, sometimes giving first names, sometimes stating only Miss or Mrs. There are more men listed than women. Road numbers are not always included. Other directories list people by roads, in alphabetical order. They help to show the growth of Dunstable over these years. High Street North increases from 108 mentions in 1900 to 195 in 1919, although 20 or so are listed in earlier years as Upper Houghton Regis. High Street South goes from 107 to 205. Church Street increases from 36 to 131 and West Street from 73 to 162. In 1900 26 streets are mentioned. This rises to 54 in 1919. In 1900 there are 502 entries, in 1919 this rises to 2268. Chiltern Road first appears in 1903. In 1906 we get Albert Street, Borough Road, Britain Street, Burr Street, Upper Burr Street, Church Walk, Garden Road, Kirby Road, Manchester Place, Richard Street, Upper Union Street and West Parade. Blows Road and Stuart Street first appear in 1913.

As with most research, new questions arise as the work progresses. Houghton Road is initially called Mixt Way, or Mixes Way. New Street becomes Station Road. Clifton Road, England's Lane and Tavistock Street are not mentioned in 1912 although they are in 1911 and 1913. In 1909 there are 9 people living in New Road. This would appear to be in the St. Peter's Road/England's Lane area. In 1909 and 1910 there are 15 residents in Station View. From 1911 this is called Capron Road. Richard Walden in Streets Ahead says that the origins of the name Capron Road are unclear. I was interested to find: -

Capron, Mary Jane, 2a Albion Street, 1919

Some addresses are given as a house and no road. Many of these I know but am currently looking for the sites of: - Wimbledon Villas, Boundary Villa, Queen Street.

The initial Cross Street is between West Street and St. Mary's Street. It becomes Cross Street South in 1915 when Cross Street North, between Beale Street and Chiltern Road, is first mentioned. England's Lane used to go as far as Wellington Terrace. Britain Street in 1900 only went from Wellington Terrace to the High Street. Union Street went as far as Edward Street. From there to Chiltern Road was called Upper Union Street. In most years, the houses in Priory Road are un-numbered but those in Richard Street start at 28. Where numbering does take place, houses are often numbered up one side of the road and back down the other. This was all right if no new houses were built. If, however, development took place at the field end of the road, numbering became a problem. For this reason, numbers were re-organised in 1921 with

odd numbers on one side and even numbers on the other. In the case of Victoria Street, No. 1 kept its number, so all the other odd numbers were on that side of the road. This is probably what happened in the rest of the 1921 re-organisation.

The 1900 Kelly's states that both Dunstable railway stations are in the parish of Houghton Regis. Many local names appear over and over again, among others: - **Bandy, Fountain, Turvey, Dolman, Franklin, Boskett, Champkin, Tompkins, Lockhart, Moore, Thring, Rollings, Bennett, Benning, Bunker, Costin, Headey and Gutteridge.** These last two are sometimes spelt Heady and Guttridge.

There are many interesting finds, including: -

Buckle, Edward T, 48 Victoria Street, 1900
Salvation Army Barracks, 3 High Street North, 1910
London Central Meat Co, 172 High Street South, 1900
Bagshawe, A & Co, Station Road, 1912
Smith & Dolman, St. Mary's Street, 1900
Thring, Lionel Charles Reg., High Street North, 1900, Ashton Lodge
National Telephone Co, 1 Albion Street, 1900
Macaulay, John Heyrick Revd, High Street North, 1900, Grove House
Bible Society's Depot, 12 & 13 High Street South, 1900
Borough Brass Band, Church Street, 1900
Boy Scouts, 6 Manchester Place, 1914
Billington, Thomas, George Street, 1903, Temperance Hotel
Hose, Ellen Grace, 6 Church Street, 1919, The Lodge
Smith, Worthington G, 121 High Street South, 1909
Scott, William, 23 High Street South, 1900
Bennett, Benjamin, 9 High Street North, 1910
Costin, George, High Street South, 1906, Middle Row
General Post Office, High Street North, 1913
Flemons, Joseph, Princes Street, 1903
Flemons, Joseph, 73 High Street North, 1903
Smy, Charles, 273 High Street North, 1909
Garrett, Fred Turner, 13 High Street North, 1900
Herington, Jane, West Street, 1900, Moreton House
Marchant's Picture Palace, High Street North, 1913

I have put this program on the Society's PC in Priory House. My researches on Directories 1900 - 1919 have thrown up some houses with no street given.

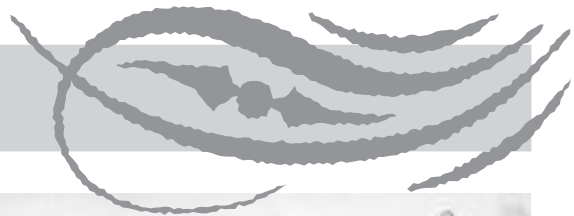
Can anyone help with the following:-

Wimbledon Villas, Boundary Villa, The Garth, Bank House, Chiltern House, Luton House, Holmleigh, Morainville, Chiltern House and Alma House. Some could be guessed at, but I don't want to do that.

Also, I have 2 houses in 1906 in Queen Street. Also in 1909, there are 8 addresses in New Road, which appears to be in the England's Lane/St. Peter's Road area. In 1909 and 1910, there is a 'Station View', but which station?

Hugh Garrod

Dunstable Museum Trust



DUNSTABLE Museum Trust, which began as a result of the 1970s campaign to save a listed building in Church Street from demolition, has been formally wound-up.

The trust has handed over its remaining funds and historic collections to the Dunstable and District Local History Society.

These include hundreds of photographs, taken by Bertha Eyres, recording changes in the town around Ashton Street, Church Street and High Street North.

MORETON HOUSE SCHOOL

Also included is a series of pictures featuring the old Moreton House School in West Street.

The trust led the fight to save the timber-framed building at 26 Church Street, dating back to the 13th or 14th century, which is now the home of the Il Millefiori Italian restaurant.

The late Vaughan Basham galvanised the town into action when he learned that the building, then known as Mentmore House, was in such a state of neglect that it was going to be pulled down.

One of its unusual features is a dragon beam, which allowed its builders to have an overhang on two adjoining walls.

An action group, called the Friends of Mentmore House and led by Vaughan Basham, Barry Horne, David and Vanessa Hornby, Janet Steele, Michael Hazelton-Swales, Wendy Mills and Ron Grace, raised funds and successfully opposed the redevelopment plans at two public inquiries.

During the campaign it had become clear that the Friends would have to suggest a beneficial use for the building if it were saved, and their idea was that it could become a town museum. They renamed themselves Friends of Dunstable Museum, formed a company and charity called Dunstable Museum Trust, and organised a series of fund-raising events, including Transport Extravaganzas and regular displays in Dunstable Library.

However, the rescued building was eventually sold by its owners and renovated to become the present restaurant.

PRIORY HOUSE

'After about fifteen years of the campaign we lost impetus particularly when the South Beds District Council sold off Priory House which Dunstable Borough Council had purchased in the 1940s to be the town museum,' said Barry Horne, the trust's treasurer. 'We just didn't have the time to do all these things. And the library had decided it did not want the museum displays any more.'

Eventually, the trust decided to back the town council's efforts to repurchase Priory House and transform it into a heritage centre. The trust donated £13,000 from its funds to help achieve this.

Now the trust's remaining funds, some £600, have been given to the history society, to be used to provide additional displays at the centre.

Earlier the Friends of Dunstable Museum had disbanded and in doing so gave rise to the Dunstable and District Local History Society.



Moreton House School



Moreton House School Garden

A LAST RESORT

I've tried my hand at Literature
I've tried my hand at Art.
In Law I've struggled to secure
A satisfactory start.
I've tried my hand at everything,
Later falling with a thud.
I've tried in vain
with might and main
But I'm a perfect dud.
And with everything I've done,
I'm minus a position.
I'll have to undertake my son
To become a Politician.



Found in copy of the Dunstable Gazette dated 19 February 1929

Rita Swift

THE GOOSEY FAMILY

A fascinating collection of photographs has been donated to the society by Richard Goosey, who was brought up in Houghton Regis.

They include pictures of the cement works being built and views of the village taken from the top of the tall chimney there dated November 1925. There's also a remarkable view of people promenading down High Street North which may have been taken in 1910.

Richard Goosey was a reporter on the Luton News in 1967 and 1968 but then became a primary school teacher. From 1973 until 2002 he worked for the European Schools, first in Luxembourg and then, for 23 years, in Munich.

After retirement he and his wife Ann moved to Shropshire to be near their respective families.

Richard's great-grandparents, Alfred and Mary-Jane Goosey, moved into a house in Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, on their marriage in 1876 and the building was the Goosey family home until 1972. The house, a little way down from the parish church on the opposite side of the road, was demolished in 1973 and accommodation for old people was built on the site.

Mary-Jane employed a few ladies who made straw hats in a large room which formed the upper storey of a row of outbuildings at the side of the house. Although she died in 1929, the sewing machines were still in place, thick with dust, when Richard played there as a child. At that time, a cobbler, George Robinson, had his workshop there.

Richard's grandfather, Sydney, worked for a Luton hat firm, Smith and Lister. He went to work in a horse and trap as far as Dunstable North Station, and from there by train. Sydney's wife, Nance, was the daughter of a draper, William Brightman, of High Street North, Dunstable, and originally from Leeds.

Richard's father, Bryan, was a constructional engineer and worked as a young man on the building of the Portland Cement works in the village, including the first chimney.



The cement works being constructed at Houghton Regis in November 1925



Mr Goosey's family home (now demolished) in Bedford Road, Houghton Regis,

John Buckledee



A view of Houghton from the top of the cement works chimney, taken in 1925

AN UNUSUAL WED -



PICTURE COURTESY OF BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON ARCHIVE AND RECORD SERVICE

The photograph above was published as a postcard which turned up in a private collection acquired recently by the Archives and Records Service.



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Witnessed at St Paul Church in the Parish of Dunstable in the County of Bedford						
Name of Witness	Age	Position	Signature	Signature of the Clerk	Signature of the Minister	Signature of the Groom
George West	25	Bachelor	[Signature]	[Signature]	George West	[Signature]
Samuel Matthews	22	Widower	[Signature]	[Signature]	John Matthews	[Signature]

Witnessed at St Paul Church in the Parish of Dunstable in the County of Bedford

Name of Witness	Age	Position	Signature	Signature of the Clerk	Signature of the Minister	Signature of the Groom
Richard MacCollom	26	Bachelor	[Signature]	[Signature]	Richard MacCollom	[Signature]
Mary Ann Adams	46	Widow	[Signature]	[Signature]	Mary Ann Adams	[Signature]

Though the wedding was reported in the Luton News it was not mentioned in the Dunstable Gazette. According to the marriage certificate the bride and groom were both living at an address in Church Street at the time of the wedding, but neither was living there when the 1901 census was taken. It seems likely that both surnames were spelt differently in different places. The bride was possibly Mary Lunnon, a name found in the Stanbridge/Billington area. Her original surname was Adams and there was certainly a Mary Ann Adams born in Billington in 1860, which would have made her 46 in 1906 (It was not uncommon for people to falsify their ages when they got married if there was a big difference in the ages of the marriage partners).

At the moment it has not been possible to find out anything further about the couple.

What was the travelling group to which Thadeus belonged?

Was it a travelling fair or circus?

When did he come to England, or was he born here?

How long is the 'some time ago' when he came to Dunstable?

When and where did Mary Ann get married the first time and when did her first husband die?

If anyone can answer any of these questions, please let us know.

Joan Curran

Extract from Luton News 28 June 1906

AN UNUSUAL WEDDING

On Saturday afternoon the Parish Church was crowded to witness an unusual wedding. The contracting parties were Thadeus MacCollom, a coloured young man, who some time ago came to Dunstable with a travelling company, and Mary Ann Lunun, a widow, formerly of Billington.

The Rev W.W.C.Baker, rector, conducted the marriage service, and the churchwardens and sidesmen marshalled people to their seats. Outside the church there were also crowds of people who witnessed the bride and groom arrive in a closed carriage, while Inspector Mason and other police officers preserved excellent order. After the wedding ceremony the happy pair, as they proceeded from the church, were showered with rice, maize and confetti.

After leaving the church Mr and Mrs MacCollom proceeded in an open carriage to a local photographer's to be photographed, attracting a great deal of attention as they drove down the High Street.

DUNSTABLE MARKETS: 1870 – NOW



PART 4 - OMER ROUCOUX

(Parts 1 to 3 can be found in the previous issues of the Newsletter nos. 26, 27 and 28)

AN important document was published in 1871 by the Dunstable Local Government Board. Here follow some of the 15 rules given in the document.

1. A Market shall be held on Wednesday and Saturday in each week for the sale of Straw-plait, Straw-plait Goods, Corn, Wool, Hay, Straw, Cattle, Sheep, Goats, Swine, Horses, Mules, Asses, Fish, Poultry, Meat, Fruit, Vegetables, Provisions, Goods, Agricultural Produces, Implements, and Merchandize.
2. A Statute Market shall be held once a year for ever, on the fourth Monday in September, for the hiring of Servants and labourers in Husbandry, and for the general purpose of a yearly Market, for the sale of Goods, Meat, Fruits, etc...
3. Four yearly Markets shall be held in each year for ever, on Ash Wednesday, the twenty-second day of May, the twelfth day of August, and the twelfth day of November, for the sale of Cattle, Sheep and all other Goods and Merchandize...
4. The Markets shall be held in High Street North, High Street South, West Street, and Church Street, and in such other Public Streets and Highways and in such parts and spaces as the said Local Board may from time to time direct. The Auction Sales shall take place in such places, spaces, and localities, as the local Board shall from time to time direct.



The drawing of the market in 1885 by Worthington G. Smith 'Sketch from my Work Room Window' is well known. This is only a section of it to show in the middle background the Almshouses and in the right foreground the Nag's Head. We can also observe some of the six market stalls for the construction of which tenders were invited in April 1871 as can be seen in the advertisement reproduced in the right column.



BOROUGH OF DUNSTABLE.

The Town Council of the Borough of Dunstable, invite **TENDERS** for the construction of

SIX MARKET STALLS

A Stall of the description required may be seen in the Market Place. Tenders (sealed) to be sent to my office, not later than Six o'Clock on Tuesday, the 25th April, inst.

CHAS. S. BENNING,
TOWN CLERK.

Dunstable,
April 24th, 1871.

Application is requested to be made to Superintendent George, for further particulars.

W. J. SMITH, PRINTER, BOOKSELLER, AND STATIONER, DUNSTABLE.

5. The Markets shall on Wednesday begin at Nine o'clock in the Morning, and shall be closed at Six o'clock in the Evening, and on Saturdays shall be closed at Twelve o'clock in the Evening in each week... booths, caravans, stallage, and other erections, shall be cleared off and removed by Twelve o'clock at midnight. The time of opening and closing of the Market on Wednesday, shall be announced the ringing of the Market Bell...
6. Stalls, Stallages, Trestles, Standings, and Hurdles will be provided in the markets by the Local Board.
9. No person occupying any Stall,... shall suffer any dirt, rubbish, litter, garbage, oyster shells, or refuse, to remain under or about the same respectively... and all dirt, rubbish,... arising from the sale or cleansing of animals, game, fish, vegetable shall be immediately put into a proper tub or basket, which shall be provided...
13. No wagon, cart, truck, trolley, or barrow shall stand in any of the streets near, adjoining to or in the market for a longer period than is necessary for loading or unloading, and must thereafter be at once removed.
15. Every person offending against any of the above Bye Laws shall forfeit and pay for every such offence a penalty not exceeding Five Pounds.

CHANGES OF VENUE

In 1964 the council removed the rights to hold a market on 'a strip of land between the pavement on the South West side of High Street South and the trunk itself'. The cattle market which had been held there traditionally for many years had ceased to function in 1955. The market could not continue reduced as it was to the pavement on the west side of High Street North. So at the same date of 1st April 1964, the new market opened in front of the new Civic Centre which had recently been opened.

Some people did not appreciate the change and for some months Mr. F.C. and Mrs. J.E. Cuss had to be given notices that they were 'infringing market rights of the corporation and trespassing on the site of the former market property of the Corporation by trading from a van equipped as a mobile shop on the site of the former market at High Street North, on both market and non-market days.'

In 1987 the market moved to the north side of the Queensway Hall, where fixed stalls were installed.

In 1996 a Friday market started with much success in the small area of Ashton Square between the Methodist Church and Wilkinson's. In July 1997 the Town Council backed the plan to extend this area into the adjacent car park and into The Square after the taxi rank and the bus station were relocated. 'Stallholders say the benefits of moving the market are considerable reports the Dunstable Gazette of 2nd July 1997. Shoppers would be more likely to visit it as it would be on a through route to the town centre, it would add interest to the area and be close to public transport. Chairwoman of the market, Diane Naylor, added: "The market needs a certain volume of pedestrian traffic to remain viable to traders. Because it is a long way from the banks, building societies and shops, we lose a large part of the floating shoppers and the impulse buyers and if the weather is bad we are particularly hard hit."

In 1999 the market was removed from the Square, in front of the Methodist Church, and expanded into the car park up to the Methodist bookshop. The space along High Street South was arranged to get the Millennium clock tower.

Greeting New Members

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the following new members:

Mr & Mrs David Cheshire
Mr & Mrs John Spence
Andrew Harries

Sad Farewells



We are also sorry to announce the sad loss of the following valued members of the society:

Betty Brown	Kitty Darby
Harry Downes	Fred Moore
Pat Pocknell	Clive Wright

Visit to the Houses of Parliament

A visit to the Houses of Parliament has been arranged for Tuesday 16th June at 11.25am.

The visit will be limited to 40 people only, in two parties of 20, the largest group the guides can manage. This restriction in numbers has necessitated places being available to members only.

Security in the Palace of Westminster is very tight. Therefore I will have to complete a listing of attendees for security purposes and return to Andrew Selous's Secretary who is kindly organising the visit on our behalf. She has indicated to me that once the list is completed, we can only delete names. Thereby no reserve list will be made on this occasion.

The tour of both Houses will conclude in the Westminster Hall at about 1.00pm where there is a café serving hot and cold snacks.

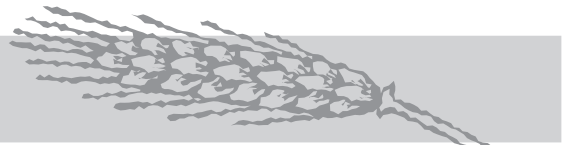
To conclude the visit Andrew Selous has agreed to meet with us in a House of Commons committee room for some 20 minutes and he will be available from 1.30pm.

I still have to finalise the arrangements especially as some members may wish to have a cooked meal in the café. 30 minutes for this purpose seems tight, and I will be asking if 2.00pm – 2.30pm could be accommodated for meeting our Member of Parliament. I will update members at our next meeting.

Gordon Ivinson



Members' memories



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 third in a series of anecdotes told to John Buckledee by the Dunstable folk mentioned below.

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.

DUNSTABLE MEMORABILIA

Philip Buckle has formed an interesting collection of Dunstable memorabilia which used to be displayed in his shop at Middle Row.

These include (very appropriately in a gents' outfitters) a brown bowler discovered in a bricked-up cavity in a chimney at the old Gibbs and Dandy shop in High Street South.

It was found, together with an invoice dated 1847 from Messrs Lee Brothers, when the building was being altered by Gibbs and Dandy.

The hat probably belonged to the foreman of the men who put up the original shop - it often used to be part of the 'topping out' ceremony at new buildings for some headgear to be left in this way - and was given to Philip by Mr John Dandy.

Philip's collection also included a long, moth-eaten sock, probably once part of the uniform of an ostler or groom, discovered between floorboards in 1981 at Grove House. This was a coaching inn long before it became the headquarters of Dunstable Town Council.

The wool sock, dark grey in colour, had been made in two parts which had been neatly sewn together and included a loop of fabric at the top centre of the foot so that it could be connected to a shoe buckle or a spat.

A clay pipe was found at Philip's shop at 24 High Street South during alterations in 1969. The particular shape of the bowl of the 'church warden's' pipe meant that it could be dated to around 1660.

Apparently, the pipes were sold already filled with tobacco and smokers broke the stem when it was finished.

Mr T. Morris donated a black bowler hat made in 1930 and remaining in good condition despite being worn and having considerable use over 50 years by his father John Morris.

THE VOGUE COMPANY

Omer Roucoux has a Meccano-style building kit, passed to him by the late John Lunn with the information that it was made in Dunstable. It's called "The Vogue Steel Construction Set". However, the Vogue company was based in Melton Mowbray. Does any member know the local connection?

THE OLD HALF MOON ROLLER SKATING RINK

Fred Moore and **Bernard Stevens** gave me a whole series of anecdotes sparked by memories of the old Half Moon Roller Skating Rink which stood on Half Moon Hill in London Road.. It was on the left hand side going up the hill and is now the site of Camden Motors garage.

The rink was built in about 1936 by Aubyn Pratt. His father, George Pratt, owned Park Farm whose fields were between the Sugar Loaf and the Grammar School.

During the war the rink's building was taken over by Hughes, scientific

engineers, who made compasses and other instruments there.

It became a skating rink again when the war ended and attracted big crowds. It included a café and Aubyn also ran a garage next to the rink.

When he died his wife Phil continued the skating business with her daughter Sheila until the early 1960s.

The skating rink stood on the edge of open land at that end of Dunstable - there were no more buildings until you came to a double-fronted house which is now part of the Highwayman Hotel.

People who lived in the house included Mr and Mrs Gillham and later Mr and Mrs Beaumont. Mr Beaumont ran the old A1 transport café on the Watling Street almost opposite Tebworth Turn.

Bert England had his well-known garage on Half Moon Hill. And the Christmas Cracker Company was nearby, just past Half Moon Lane.

The cracker company kept a lot of local people busy. It used to deliver charms, mottoes and other festive materials to their homes where the crackers were assembled by hand and then collected for boxing up.

The company had moved to London Road from Matthew Street (on the corner of Albion Street). It had started there in a former blacksmith's workshop owned by Mr Field.

Jackman's wholesale confectionery business was next door to the cracker company. One of the people employed there was Alf Hart, well known in the town for running the Dunstable Young People's Club.

English Racing Automobiles in London Road were top-quality engine makers for racing cars.

There was an ice cream distribution company behind the old Half Moon pub in London Road. Dozens of ice cream vans used to be parked there.

THE DUNSTABLE EXCELSIOR BAND



Beverly Lennox has a treasured photograph of her grandfather, William Matthews (1896-1975) showing him in splendid uniform when he was a cornet player in the Dunstable Excelsior Band.

He is standing, third from the left, in the photo which was probably taken in the early 1920s. The conductor is probably Septimus Franklin.

Beverly would love to know more about the photo. It would be interesting to identify the building at the back. Does anyone recognise it?