

NEWSLETTER

Dunstable & District Local History Society

No. 40

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Chairman's Notes

Why should there be a photo on the front page of a Dunstable newsletter of a memorial on a hill in the Arctic?

WEBSITE

Well, it is a particularly interesting example of how far and wide the Society's website is now spreading. Its pages are being opened hundreds of times every day and the site generates dozens of queries every month.



The photo of a memorial at Salluit, Canada, commemorating the death of four people in an air crash

WILLIAM RIXSON

The question which led to our receiving the photo was its connection with William Rixson, remembered as an antiques dealer in Dunstable. The story is told in detail on page 298. But the correspondence it generated has been fascinating. It began with a message from the Inuit community of Salluit in Northern Canada, near Hudson Bay, who had discovered a reference to William Rixson on our website and connected it with the name on the wreckage of a plane they had found.

That prompted us to contact members of the Rixson family, whom we had traced earlier because one of their ancestors, Arthur Mooring, editor of the Dunstable Gazette, wrote the novel about Dun the Robber republished some years ago by the Book Castle. Arthur Mooring had married into the Rixson family in the days when his bride's father ran the Plume of Feathers pub in West Street.

BUFFALO JOE

The trail then led to the aviation authorities and to details of a Dakota aircraft which had crashed near Salluit. We needed copyright permission to reproduce a photo of this, so we contacted the photographer, Chuck Tolley, who lives at Yellowknife in Northern Canada. He was intrigued by the story and set out to see if the aircraft's log book still survives. He visited the nearby airport where Buffalo Airlines is based. The owner is Joe MacBryan, famous as Buffalo Joe in the TV documentary series Ice Pilots, who had bought the remains of the crashed aircraft for use as spares. But no log book so far. The nose section of the plane has been used in a reconstruction of a DC-3 in the Calgary Aero Space Museum.

MEMORIAL

However, we then received the photo of a memorial at Salluit which honours four people killed in another Dakota crash there. So perhaps (as now seems likely) we had been researching the wrong aircraft! It set us off on another trail, and the story continues...

MEDIEVAL DUNSTABLE

I hope every member of the History Society will buy a copy of the book "Medieval Dunstable: Its Monasteries, Manors,

Markets and Mêlées" which will be on sale, price £12.50, any day now. It has been a labour of love for a couple of years now by a team which includes myself, Jean Yates, Hugh Garrod, Joan Curran, Vivienne Evans, Tony Woodhouse and the Manshead Archaeological Society. I think you will be surprised by the amount of interesting new/old facts which have been uncovered.

SOCIETY VISITS

The weather was particularly kind for the Society's visit to Highclere Castle, where the tv series Downton Abbey is filmed. It was our coach driver's third trip to Highclere this year, and he told us that previous outings had been ruined by torrential rain or oppressive heat. Ours was just right!

There was surprisingly little about the TV serial on display, even though it has certainly swelled Highclere's crowds. Staff there told us of pre-TV days when there was only a smattering of visitors. Now there is a waiting list. Our thanks to Gordon Ivinson for persevering on the phone to make sure that our outing was possible. Thanks, too, to Joan Curran for organising the trip to Wrest Park and to Sue Turner for arranging the visit to the walled garden at Luton Hoo.

SPEAKER

Alas, one of our speakers on our programme for next year has had to cancel. Mike Payne was due to speak on May 13 about Pinewood film studios where the James Bond movies are made. Mike, who is a member of the History Society at Great Missenden, will now be visiting us at a later date. And we are negotiating for an alternative speaker for May.

John Buckledee

FROM MULLED ALE TO MORTGAGES



As a result of the Heritage Lottery grant to preserve the Tudor wall paintings now housed at Priory House, Joan Curran painstakingly researched the origins of 20 High Street North, where they were discovered...

THE STORY OF THE WHITE HART

Not many people now remember the White Hart that used to be in High Street North, on the corner of a lane approximately where Nicholas Way is now.

HENRY VIII'S TIME

It was known that there had also been an earlier White Hart, way back in Henry VIII's time, in a lane leading off the main street, but that must have gone long ago. And apart from the Red Lion, these were the only inns we knew of in that part of the High Street. So when experts looked at the wall paintings from what used to be Charlie Cole's shop, now the Nationwide Building Society, and said they thought they might have come from an inn, I was puzzled and the name of the White Hart did not occur to me. Not at first, that is.



The Nationwide Building Society where the wall paintings were found

TIMBER FRAME

BUT ... Just supposing... Pubs and inns have often changed their names (and locations). The general rule when looking for the history of a house, as with a family, is to start from the latest information you have and work backwards, but sometimes it pays to ignore the rules. The first clue was that when the Nationwide Building Society took the building over the experts had discovered a timber frame behind the Victorian exterior, dating from about 1600. They also discovered that the building had originally only had two storeys and an extra floor had been added in the 19th century.

SOLD TO WILLIAM BENNET IN 1606

It was an exceptionally lucky break to discover that the Record Office had deeds relating to the White Hart that went right back to this early date, so it seemed worth having a look at these. In 1606 the inn had belonged jointly to William Heath, a yeoman of Dunstable, and Richard Andrews, a draper from Houghton Regis, and in 1606 they sold it to the sitting tenant, William Bennet.

PAYING TAX ON 15 HEARTHES IN 1671

He in turn sold it to a gentleman called John Marvell, whose grave slab is in the Lady Chapel of the Priory Church and bears the inscription 'Here lyeth interred the body of John Marvell, innkeeper, who departed this life ye 28 July ANDMI 1665'. In his will he left the inn to his wife, Elizabeth, who let it to a tenant named Nathaniel Wimpew, or Wimpey. (The first Wimpey Bar?) Nathaniel must have done a good trade, because in 1671 he was paying tax on 15 hearths, according to the tax return.

SOLD IN 1736

Elizabeth Marvell married again and became Mrs William Bellew and when the Bellews' daughter married she and her husband, John Wickens, were given the White Hart as part of the marriage settlement. Evidently they had a son who rejoiced in the name of Bellew Wickens and in 1736, with his wife, Amy, he sold the inn to John Miller, a member of a wealthy Dunstable family who owned a lot of property in the town. Forty years later another John Miller (confusingly there were three generations of John Millers) sold it again to Martin Cole, of Bedford (no relation to Charlie!), and soon afterwards it ceased to be an inn.

WHITE HART MOVED IN 1785

By 1785 the name had been transferred to premises a bit further along the road, and the White Hart was listed in the directory as one of the four main inns of the town. Before long this building, which was probably already old, was demolished and re-built and the inn flourished. It was the time when the coaching trade was at its peak and, unlike the old White Hart, the new inn had space at the back for coaches and stables with easy access to them along the lane, more or less along the line of today's Nicholas Way, but then called Houghton Lane, which ran along the side of the building.

SOLD TO JAMES BUTTFIELD IN 1801

The old White Hart became a private house for a time and changed hands several times until it was bought by James Buttfield, first described as a 'gent', but later as a straw hat manufacturer, in 1801. And there the deeds ended.

FROM 1820 TO THE PRESENT

Starting from today and working backwards I knew, from earlier research, that Thomas George Collings had bought No.20, High Street North, in the early 1820s. He added another floor to the house, gave it a Victorian façade, built workshops at the back and bought the house next door, and for many years had a thriving hat manufacturing business there. But as the straw hat trade declined towards the end of the century the Collings family were forced to sell up; the ground floor of the house became the Misses Wilsons' hat shop in the 1910s and in the 1920s Charlie Cole opened his cycle shop there. Since 1985 it has been the Dunstable branch of the Nationwide Building Society and with their co-operation and financial help the wall paintings have been removed and are now on view to the public in Priory House.

PLAN OF THE SITE

The question was, was this the same building as the White Hart of the deeds at the Record Office? Fortunately the deeds of the past went into great detail describing the location of the building, telling us who lived on the north side and who lived on the south, and which way the building faced and what was behind it. Even better, I eventually discovered that one of the conveyances had a sketch plan of the site, which showed clearly that where Nathaniel Wimpew provided accommodation for travellers passing through Dunstable in the 17th century was where today the Nationwide provides for people coming here to live. It was the same building.

DEMOLISHED

Unfortunately we still do not know who was responsible for the wall paintings. The 'new' White Hart was demolished to make way for the entrance to the Quadrant shopping precinct in the 1960s.

Joan Curran



Photo of the new White Hart taken just before it was demolished in the 1960s. On the right is Charlie Cole's shop, the White Hart of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Downright Dunstable

As part of the Medieval Dunstable project, I searched the British Library website for anything containing 'Dunstable', 'Dunstable' or other variations.

I found many items which were relevant to my enquiries but also found entries which, though interesting, were clearly nothing to do with the project. One such was entitled 'Downright Dunstable' I reproduce the title page here.

Plain Truth
Or
Downright Dunstable
a
POEM
Containing
The Author's Opinion of the sale of
Poetic and Prose Performances
With
Some Critical Thoughts concerning
Horace and Virgil
Together
With a few Hints on the Author's Amours as
Well as his private Sentiments
On Government. London
Printed for J Roberts in Warwick Lane
MDCCL price One shilling.

The author appears to be the aforementioned J Roberts although he teases his readers about his real identity for he says:

*But now I know, dear friend, thou'lt ask,
Who is the Author under mask?
I'll tell thee then, in truth, 'tis true,
I'm downright Dunstable, true-blue.*

'Downright Dunstable' is, in fact, the first item in a book which is a bound collection of poems, pamphlets, satires etc from the first half of the 18th century. The longest piece is called 'The Pulpit Fool, a Satyr' from 1707. The tone of the volume is a cross between the poet Pope and Blackadder III. MDCCL is 1740 and is the earliest reference I have found to 'downright Dunstable' Is it also the origin of 'True Blue'?



Title page of *Downright Dunstable*, published in 1790

OTHER REFERENCES TO DUNSTABLE

I also found 'The Case of Miss Dunstable' a novel published in the early 1920s and set in Somerset. It has quite a good plot but the language is somewhat dated. Also, 'Tales of Dunstable Weir', by Zack, published by Methuen 1901. It consists of seven stories, possibly set near Appledore, and written in a pseudo West Country dialect.

Hugh Garrod

Isaac and George Cruikshank



Isaac Cruikshank was the son of a customs house officer. He was born in Edinburgh on 5th October, 1764.

He worked as an etcher in Edinburgh but had ambitions to become a serious artist and studied with a local artist. At the age of twenty-one he moved to London and had two paintings accepted by the Royal Academy. In 1796 a picture was published of "Itinerant Dealers in Dunstable Ware" showing a young girl carrying baskets. (Dunstable Ware was a plaited straw covering of containers, boxes etc.)

GIFTED SONS AND DAUGHTER

However, Isaac's greatest success was as teacher to his own sons George and Robert. A daughter, Margaret Eliza, also a promising artist, died at the age of eighteen. Isaac Cruikshank died in April, 1811 of alcohol poisoning at the age of fifty-five as a result of a drinking contest and is buried near his home in London.



'Itinerant Dealers in Dunstable Ware'
an engraving by Isaac Cruikshank

Beds & Luton Archives Service Ref Z 49/180

BRITAIN'S MOST IMPORTANT CARICATURIST

George Cruikshank was born in London on 27th September 1792. After a brief education at an elementary school in Edgware, George worked with his father in his studio although he had wanted to study at the Royal Academy. His father insisted that he needed his help in the studio. Eventually George Cruikshank became Britain's most important caricaturist of the 19th century illustrating many of the Dickens' novels.

MARRIAGE TO A DUNSTABLE GIRL

On 16th October, 1827, he married Mary Ann Walker (1807–1849) of Dunstable.

George Cruikshank, deeply in debt, died of an acute respiratory infection at his home, 263 Hampstead Road, on 1st February, 1878 and his remains rest in St. Paul's Cathedral. After his death, it was discovered that Cruikshank had fathered 11 illegitimate children with a mistress named Adelaide Attree, his former servant, who lived close to where he lived with his wife.

Rita Swift

The Holyhead & Chester Mails



'The Holyhead and Chester Mails at Hockley Hill, near Dunstable' by Henry Thomas Alken

Photo courtesy of The British Museum

This picture was found on the British Museum website and is a hand-coloured aquatint entitled: 'The Holyhead and Chester Mails at Hockley Hill, near Dunstable' – presumably the pre-cutting Chalk Hill. It was painted in 1837 by Henry Thomas Alken, of two coaches and a covered wagon stuck in snow; a man immersed in the snow in foreground at left, holding the reins of four horses with a cart coming to the rescue.

Alken was born on 12th October, 1785, the third son of sporting artist, Samuel Alken. He worked in both oil and watercolor and was a skilled etcher. Known for his paintings and prints of hunting, coaching and shooting scenes and early in his career he used the pseudonym 'Ben Tally Ho'. Although fairly affluent for most of his career, he fell on hard times towards the end of his life and died in 1851 and was buried at his daughter's expense.

David Turner

COACH ACCIDENT



Rita Swift found this article in the Times dated May 29th, 1835:

SERIOUS COACH ACCIDENT NEAR DUNSTABLE

On Monday morning, about 4 o'clock, the Halifax Hope coach was upset, on its way to London, between Hockliffe and Dunstable. The coach was heavily laden with passengers and luggage, a large quantity of the latter being very imprudently piled on the roof. At the time the accident occurred, the coachman was urging his horses forward at rather an immoderate speed, and ventured at the same pace to descend a hill about 2 miles below Dunstable, without taking the precaution of ordering the slipper to be put on the wheel. The horses at last became quite unmanageable; in consequence of which the coach, after reeling two or three times in several directions, fell on the offside. The scene at this moment was truly heartrending; the groans and shrieks of the unhappy sufferers were the more distressing, as at the early hour it was quite impossible to obtain immediate assistance.

Two or three gentleman escaped almost unhurt, and promptly took the best means for administering relief. The rain at the time fell rather plentifully, and the quantity of blood which was flowing around clearly indicated that injuries of no trifling nature had been sustained. The coachman and guard were found much injured and lying on the ground apparently insensible. On a more close examination it was found that the bodies of two gentlemen were buried beneath the luggage with which the roof was loaded. After this had been removed with some difficulty, they were seen with their faces so dreadfully mangled, and clotted with gore, that it was quite impossible to recognise the features, the whole forming a picture too horrible to describe. One of the gentlemen is in great danger. The other was not so dangerously wounded. There were also several ladies and gentlemen who escaped with comparatively little injury. Medical aid was procured as speedily as circumstances would allow, and the sufferers were conveyed in post-chaises to Dunstable, where they are now being treated with every kindness their deplorable situation demands.

Audio Guides



The Medieval Project has produced two audio guides for visitors to the Priory.

The first is of the Hidden Priory, which Dunstable lost at the time of the Reformation. It is narrated by Jean Yates with characters voiced by Chris Young, Phil Baker and Pheobe Clear, the text was written by Tony Woodhouse.

The second is of the Priory Church. It is narrated by Veronica Yates and the text was written by Hugh Garrod.

The audio guides can be hired from the shop in Priory House.

The hiring fee is £2.50 with a returnable deposit of £10.

Greeting New Members

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

Neil Cockburn
Roy Hopkins
J. Plater
David Taylor

Ms Monica Dixon
David Lewis
B. Ralley
David Warner



Sad Farewell



We are very sorry to announce the sad loss of
Mrs. Pat Davis



Illustration of St. Fremund's death from the 'Metrical lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund' in the British Museum

Fremund, reputedly the son of King Offa, renounced position and money to follow Jesus, becoming a hermit on the island of Lundy.

Whilst there his cousin, King Edmund, was killed by the Danes when they invaded West Mercia in 870. As Offa was now dead, the people asked Fremund to come to their aid. Fremund agreed and won a great victory at Radford Semele, near present-day Leamington Spa.

DECAPITATION

When Fremund decided to return to Lundy instead of becoming king, his friend Duke Oswi became enraged, drawing his sword and decapitating Fremund, which Oswi immediately repented. Fremund's corpse picked up the head and walked some distance. When it struck the ground with its sword a spring arose and Fremund washed his head and wounds before finally expiring. Oswi buried Fremund's body at nearby Offchurch.

THREE VIRGINS

Sixty-three years after the burial, three virgins, one deaf, one dumb and one crippled, walked through Offchurch and were struck by lightning. They saw an angel who told them to dig up the body and move it to a spot three miles from Banbury, the present site of Prescote manor. Having undertaken this task, they were completely healed.

VISION OF AN ANGEL

Some years later, Edelbert, a pilgrim in Jerusalem, had a vision of an angel telling him to go to a chapel with five priests near Prescote, where he would find the body of Fremund. He was not willing to do this and, in his dream, he wrestled with the angel. Upon waking, he discovered that his shoulder has been dislocated. This persuaded him to carry out the mission. After much travelling he found the grave and removed the remains to a shrine he had built a short distance away. Local people discovered that after their sick animals ate grass near the shrine they recovered.

PILGRIMAGE FOR A CURE

After many pilgrims came to be cured, it was decided to move Fremund to the nearest monastery, at Dorchester on the Thames. Bishop Birinus came to Prescote and loaded the remains of St Fremunds onto an ox cart. However, the cortege did not get far, because when it got to the village of Cropredy, the ox refused to move any further, so the local people built a chapel on the spot. In 1050 the first church was built to house the bones and many miracles are recorded.

ST. FREMUND TRANSFERRED TO DUNSTABLE PRIORY

About 150 years later, Cropredy church was in much need of repair which the villagers could not afford. Richard de Morins, the Prior of Dunstable, arrived and made them an 'Offa' they could not refuse. He promised the money they needed in exchange for the bones, and King John was asked for permission to transfer the remains to Dunstable, which was granted. The villagers reluctantly accepted. However, they managed to retain a few bones and miracles continued in Cropredy. Most of the bones of St. Fremund were transported to Dunstable in 1205, where an altar was dedicated to him in 1207 and this did wonders for the commercial life of Dunstable. In 1213 his bones were moved to the high altar and re-dedicated by Bishop Hugh II. The pilgrims, who passed through Dunstable on their way to or from the shrine of St Alban, would stop and pray for a miracle there as well. The bones of St Fremund remained in Dunstable and miracles continued to be reported.



Reconstruction of the Shrine of St. Fremund was made by Weatherfield School

BONES DESTROYED DURING REFORMATION

The altar and the bones it contained were destroyed during the Reformation.

In 1962 the east wall of the Priory church was re-ordered and two windows were installed to celebrate the saints to whom altars had been dedicated in the pre-Reformation priory. St Fremund is one of these – along with St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, St Martin, St James and St. Nicholas. In the mid 1960s a new church was built on Dunstable's Beecroft estate. It was dedicated to St. Fremund the Martyr in May 1968 by the Bishop of St Albans.

Hugh Garrod

Memories of old Dunstable



A poignant reminder of a Dunstable man's experiences in World War II has just been sent to the Dunstable History Society thanks to the efforts of an Inuit (Eskimo) community in Northern Canada.

GEORGE WILLIAM RIXSON

George William Rixson, who ran the well-known antique shops started by his father in Church Street (later the bases for the Chez Jerome restaurant and the former Bookcastle shop) served in the British Expeditionary Force in France. He was captured, aged 19, at Dunkirk.



George William Rixson

MESSAGE FROM A PLANE CRASH

Alirio Davila, whose girlfriend Rosemary comes from the Inuit community at Salluit, a settlement on the fringes of the Arctic in Canada, emailed the Society telling us that the folk there had preserved a piece of aluminium from a plane which had crashed and buried itself in the snow. They were intrigued because it bore a scribbled message with the name and address of G.W Rixson, 26 Church Street, Dunstable, Beds, adding: "P.O.W. (Prisoner Of War) 12th June 1940 - 14th April 1945 - 5 long years (underlined)".



The piece of the crashed plane bearing G. W. Rixson's message

Alirio was wondering if he had been rescued from the crash by the Inuit people.

We contacted Mr Rixson's relatives, but they know nothing about a plane crash. But subsequent inquiries and a host of fascinating e-mails between the Society and aircraft experts in Canada are perhaps beginning to solve the mystery.

Chuck Tolley, who was a teacher near Salluit at Payne Bay (now named Kangirsuk) in Arctic Quebec, has traced details of two planes which crashed there.

One aircraft, numbered CF-1QR, was a DC-3 (Dakota) built for the United States Air Force by the Douglas company in 1943. After the war it was used in Northern Canada by a number of operators and was being flown



The DC-3 Dakota CF-1QR which crashed in the Arctic

by Kenn Borek Air when it crashed at Sugluk (now called Salluit) in Quebec (now called Nunavik) on February 28, 1977. The wreckage was removed to Calgary, Alberta, in September 1983 when it was cannibalised for spares and the remnants transferred to Chipman Airport, Alberta. Chuck took a photograph of the plane in 1964, at a time when it was fitted with skis, during a great local event when it landed several miles north of Payne Bay with an electrical generator which was then hauled to the settlement on a specially-built komatik (sledge). The local Inuit people used about 90 dogs, at intervals, to haul the sledge.

Another DC-3, C-FNAR, also crashed near Salluit and the four people aboard were killed. There is a memorial to them overlooking the settlement and it now seems likely that this is the aircraft from which the graffiti was preserved. Allen Campbell, of the DC-3 Dakota Historical Society, is trying to discover details about its history. It had various registration numbers during its career, but Allen already knows that it served in two different units of the USAAF between 1944 and 1945.

So the educated guess is that one of the Dakotas was used to transport Bill Rixson back home after his release from captivity in 1945, when he wrote the message which has survived for so many years. The people of Salluit preserve it "preciously" says Alirio Davila.

DUNSTABLE GAZETTE PROVIDES THE ANSWER

Meanwhile, we here in Dunstable have been trying to uncover details about Bill Rixson's war service, but available prisoner-of-war records have been surprisingly unhelpful.

However, a trawl through the Dunstable Gazette files provided the answer.

CAPTURED BY THE GERMANS

The Dunkirk evacuation ended on June 4 1940 and although thousands of British troops reached home, many more thousands had to be left behind. It seems that Bill Rixson was captured eight days after the Germans overran the town. But it was not until August 23, 1940, that the Gazette was able to report the end of months of anxiety for his parents, Mr and Mrs William Rixson, of "Mentmore", Church Street, Dunstable, who had just learned that Sapper George William Rixson, was a prisoner of war in Germany.

Sapper Rixson, said the Gazette, was in the Royal Engineers, attached to the 51st Division, and his parents had received no news of him since May, when he was serving in France.

The Gazette's front page on April 27 1945 had a banner headline saying "Escaped Dunstable POW Saw Home Town From Air".



The Dunstable Borough Gazette of 27th April, 1945

Memories of old Dunstable continued



The paper reported the escape to American lines of George William Rixson (now described as a driver with the Royal Corps of Signals) and mentioned his journey back to England on a transport plane – perhaps the same aircraft which ended its career many years later in the Canadian Arctic. He flew over Dunstable on his way home and recognised the Downs at once.

The Gazette gave great details of his experiences. Driver Rixson had been taken prisoner at St Valerie and was then taken to Marienburg in East Prussia where for four years he was put to work on a farm. Then, with the Russians rapidly advancing, and with the sound of guns in the distance, the Germans ordered the prisoners to march westwards. It proved to be an epic journey, lasting for three months, with the exhausted column of prisoners bartering their few possessions for scraps of food from German civilians.

ESCAPE

The forced march continued for 1,500 kilometres until the column reached Magdeburg in West Germany. But the Germans found that the Americans were about to overrun the town, and gave the order for the prisoners to march again. On a dark night, with American guns heard in the distance, Driver Rixson and two comrades slipped away and succeeded in making contact with the American troops. Shortly afterwards he was put on a transport plane back to England and, peering down from the air, he saw his home town again!

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

Pam Gilheany, of Friary Field, Dunstable, has presented a Waterlow's Souvenir Programme to the Society.

There's quite a story behind the booklet, which was published as part of a dinner and concert held in the works concert hall on Saturday, April 17, 1920, to celebrate the return of Waterlow's employees from World War I. The firm had been particularly supportive of its men and women during the conflict.

The programme had belonged to Winifred Mills (nee Bandy), of 28 Union Street, who had worked at Waterlow's before her marriage.

She provided a home during the Second World War to two evacuees from London – Dolly Frankland and her seven-year-old daughter Shirley. The Frankland home, close to the Thames and what is now the Tate Gallery, had been destroyed during the blitz and Dolly's husband, Charles, was serving in North Africa as a Gunner in the Eighth Army.

Mr and Mrs Mills did not have children of their own and soon became known to the Franklands as Auntie Win and Uncle Sid.

When Dad returned from the war, the family decided to settle in Dunstable and found their own home just down the road, at 10 Union Street, where Pam was born in 1948.

Auntie Win died in 1996, aged 97, and among the mementoes she left was the programme which contains photos of all the men from the various departments of the huge printing works who had returned home safely. There's also, sadly, a list of the 19 men who had been killed.

MOUTH-WATERING DINNER

The dinner was a mouth-watering affair, with ox tail or tomato soup; fillets of plaice; roast beef, boiled mutton or roast pork with Yorkshire pudding, potatoes, broccoli and leeks; plum pudding and custard, charlotte russe, trifle, stewed prunes and apricots; followed by cheese and lettuce.

There were speeches from various notables, including Brig-General Viscount Hampden and Sir William Waterlow.

The Waterlow's Orchestra, conducted by W. Dolman, included Edward German's Nell Gwynne Suite in its performance, and the concert acts included ventriloquist Harry Hull and a song by May Windsor entitled "What Did You Do In The Great War, Daddy?".

AC-DELCO STAFF PHOTOS

Paul Eyre tells us that among the photographs left by his late great-aunt Bertha Eyre, whose great hobby was photography, are two taken in the office of AC-Delco dated September 2 1949.

She provided a list of names: Sheila Stevens, Coral Fountain, Myra Griffiths, Alan Dodd, Tony Kilby, Mr H Pegg, David Lewis, Mr J Wrigglesworth, Jean Dixon, H Robins, Arthur Smart, Connive Stambridge, Mrs Conquest, Harry Marsden, Eric Croot, Mrs Croot, Mrs Eagling and Cynthia Woolley

Paul is happy to let anybody have a copy of these photos free of charge.

OLD PEWTER TANKARD

Reginald Stones has in his possession an old pewter tankard which has inscribed on the bottom "Britannia, Dunstable".

Presumably it once belonged to the pub in Middle Row and was probably saved from the fire of 1893 about which there have been a number of articles in past newsletters. The tankard has a few hallmarks and is inscribed with the initials G F.

Reginald has had the tankard for at least 20 years and he cannot recall how he came to own it. His family have no connections with Dunstable at all. They were from Sheffield originally but moved to Highcliffe-on-Sea in Hampshire (about 10 miles away from Bournemouth) just over 50 years ago.

Their trawl through the internet looking for "Britannia Dunstable" led inevitably to the History Society's website and those articles in our newsletter.

MR AND MRS DRAPER

Sharon Heppell is hoping that History Society members might be able to help her identify the individuals in a photo that she believes was taken at the gates of the Gliding Club in Dunstable in about 1970.

They are Mr and Mrs Draper, a Romany Gypsy couple, who often parked their traditional wooden caravan at this spot and were well known to club members and people in the neighbourhood.

Sharon has been trying for many years to discover what their forenames were as part of an archive she is compiling about Draper families in this area. Did anyone know them by name or have memories of seeing them on the Downs or nearby. Or know what happened to them after 1970?



Do you remember Mr and Mrs Draper?

continued overleaf

Memories of old Dunstable continued



ANCESTORS

David Field has also recently discovered our website, and is another ex-Dunstablian who has connections with the Britannia Inn. His ancestors were publicans there from 1851-61.

Another of his ancestors, Frederick Field, was innkeeper at the Crown public house according to the 1871 census.

His grandmother's brother, Alfred Cook, was the very popular Mayor of Dunstable between 1932 and 1935. David's grandfather was a special constable from 1915 until 1941 and his father, Fred J Field, was Dunstable's Road Safety Officer for which he was presented with the News of the World's Knight of the Road award. David would love to know what year that was.

ELLIS BARBERS SHOP

Joan Curran's researches for the Dunstable medieval project led her to inquire about the old Ellis barbers shop in West Street, which was carefully dismantled when the area was redeveloped and transported to the open air museum at Chalfont St Giles.

There are not yet enough funds to enable it to be reconstructed.

Frank Cheevers wrote to our website with his memories of the shop, which he went to as a child. There were, he thinks only two barbers (possibly three) but what sticks in Frank's mind most is their ingenious idea of having a light-bulb, complete with a metal shade and a little sign which read something like "No waiting when light is lit".

With a multitude of hairdressers currently competing for trade in Dunstable, here's a good idea which some of them ought to take up.

COUNCILLOR FRED TURNER GARRETT

Heather Grosvenor has been trying to find some information about Mrs Garrett, wife of Councillor Fred Turner Garrett who was Mayor of Dunstable in 1906.

Mr Garrett was made a Freeman of the Borough in 1921 but after that information is sparse.

His wife presented the "Dunstable Challenge Cup" to the town during the time she was Mayoress.

ACK...TERRACE

Peter McHugh lives in Edward street where the terrace between number 20 and 30 has a name "Ack...Terrace".

Unfortunately the rest of the name has weathered away and Peter and his neighbours are intrigued. Does anyone in the Society know the answer?

The Society receives dozens of queries like this and we are often able to find out. One from Australia was from a lady trying to remember details about her wedding reception. What was the original name of the Holiday Inn on the Watling Street just outside Markyate? Markyate History Society provided the answer: Executive Hotel, previously the Moat House.

Prior to that there had been a transport café called the Three Sisters on the site. It was used as a stop-off point by the London Brick Company's lorries in the 1950s and 60s, as opposed to the Marston Brick Company's vehicles, which used the Betta Café in London Road.

JOHN WILLIAMS AND PERCY LEACH

A newsletter article in March 2000 by J. F Williams regarding his working life at Dunstable North Station is on the internet, and that has led to an interesting correspondence with Colin Glendinning, of Spinney Crescent, Dunstable.

Colin was interested in contacting John Williams regarding his memories of lorry driver Percy Leach, who was mentioned in the article. Percy was Colin's great-grandfather and replaced his son Les as booking clerk at the railway when Les joined the RAF early in 1942.

Mr Williams, alas, is now dead (we found that out because Society member Derek Bird remembers playing the organ at his funeral!) but this has all led to our receiving the photograph of Percy Leach standing next to his Dennis lorry in 1938. He was well known around Dunstable as he did all the local deliveries from the railway. Initially he used a horse and cart but he drove the Dennis during the war and, later, had one of the very famous Scammell Scarab three wheelers. The Gazette published a photo of him loading gas masks from a train before the start of the war.



Percy Leach with his Dennis lorry in 1938

BEDFORDSHIRE YEOMANRY

Colin has done a lot of research into the Bedfordshire Yeomanry for the period before the war before the war and up to their capture at Singapore, and has been seeking a photo of the outside of their old drill hall in High Street North.

He has a picture of the inside of the hall taken in 1938, during the Yeomanry's annual dinner. It belonged to the late Harold Golding who was a Sergeant before the war and Sergeant Major after.



Bedfordshire Yeomanry Annual Dinner at the High Street North Drill Hall in 1938

DEATH RAILWAY

In the middle of the photo is George Golding who lived at 156 High St South, Dunstable, and died as a prisoner of the Japanese. He had been in a camp called Kando on the Death Railway, and died of dysentery while being transferred by train to a hospital camp in Rangoon. He was originally buried at Kanda, he was re-interred at Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery around 1948. Colin has another photo inside the hall of a reunion in 1946 of the lucky few who made it home.

John Buckledee