

NEWSLETTER

Dunstable & District Local History Society

No. 42

August 2014



Chairman's Notes

It has been a pleasure to welcome to our meetings the society's new President, Paul Bowes, who founded the Book Castle shop in Church Street and published some 150 books about Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

NEW PRESIDENT

Paul was delighted and honoured to be invited to be our President, and travelled from his retirement home at Sessay in Yorkshire for our annual meeting. His acceptance speech mentioned his early days in Dunstable when he was trying to learn more about the town and went along to some WEA talks by Vivienne Evans. The enthusiasm generated by these sowed the seed for all those later books.

"It was a privilege to bring the thoughts, memories and expertise of a range of local authors to the wider audience they deserved," said Paul. "I like to think that permanent record will continue to give pleasure and insight to thousands more in generations to come. That is the everlasting gift, of 'the book'."

He added: "Although I now live up north in Yorkshire, rest assured my living room is blessed by serried ranks of books on Bedfordshire - to the baffled amusement of our visitors. They say: 'I never realised Dunstable was so important'."

SUCCESSFUL OUTINGS

The society's summer break was nevertheless busy with activities, including three successful outings for members. Gordon Ivinson arranged a thoroughly enjoyable journey to the Jewish Museum in London, which also involved a voyage down the nearby canal and a stroll through Camden market. Sue Turner, continuing with the society's efforts to have less-expensive outings in addition to the further-afield trips, organised tours of St Albans Cathedral and the Higgins at Bedford, where some watercolours of local scenes were brought out of storage specially for members. These events can create a lot of work and worry for those responsible, and our thanks to Sue and Gordon for volunteering!



The new Society President, Paul Bowes

POW AT DUNSTABLE

The society's website continues to be a focus for worldwide interest in Dunstable. One recent example was a message from Ann Costin, of Pond Farm, Wingfield, asking for photos of the old prisoner-of-war camp at the gliding club. She wanted to show them to a visitor from Germany, 15-year-old Anke Weyand, whose granddad had been a POW at Dunstable.

Oskar Nitzsche, now 91, had been captured while serving in a Germany cavalry regiment and was one of the prisoners who were eventually allowed out of the Dunstable camp on a daily basis to work in the area. Oskar was transported each morning to the Wingfield farm and decided to stay after the war ended rather than return to his home in a village near Dresden, in East Germany. He went back to Germany in 1955 when his family needed his help, but remained in contact with the Costin family at the farm.

GLIDING CLUB



Dunstable POW, cavalryman Oskar Nitzsche

The society was able to arrange for Anke to be shown around the gliding club by Adrian Hobbs and German-speaking Rupert Puritz. Most of the old POW buildings have now been demolished, with their foundations just visible beneath the turf, but the camp's mess hall remains, and also the brick lock-up, now a garage, which was the "prison within a prison" for any POW who had misbehaved.

Italian as well as German prisoners were held at the camp but whether they were all there at the same time or at different dates remains unclear and the full story remains to be told. A recent book about war-time POW camps in Bedfordshire surprisingly ignores Dunstable altogether, but there is a chapter with photos in the Dunstable At War volume

edited by Jean Yates and Sue King.

John Buckledee

PLEASE LET US HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

To enable us to keep you updated with information by email, would you kindly let us have your email address(es)?

Please email Cynthia Turvey at: trev_turvey@lineone.net

COULD YOU SPARE A LITTLE TIME?

Due to increasing demands at the history room, we need someone with a little spare time to assist with various projects.

Please contact Joan Curran on 01525 221963

YOUR HELP IS REQUIRED!

Last Christmas, because of illness, Rita and Joan struggled with the preparations for the Christmas party. This year they would like to have the back-up of two or three volunteers to help with the shopping and advance preparations of the food BEFORE the event. Any offers? - please contact Joan Curran on 01525 221963

Dunstable Around the World



Early in 2014 Dunstable Town Council decided that the May event this year would not be a History Day but would celebrate the theme 'Around the World'.

So this year we devoted our display to Dunstablians, past and present, who had lived or worked in other countries.

EMIGRANTS TO AMERICA

The first emigrants were people who went to America in search of religious freedom, and one of these was a zealous Protestant, Zachariah Symmes, who had once been a rector of Priory Church. A year after arriving in Charlestown (now part of Boston) he became pastor of the Baptist Church there, a position he held until his death in 1671. (see article on page 314)

A little later a group led by William and Edward Tyng founded a settlement in New England which they called Dunstable. In the early days life in the frontier town was hard – the land was a wilderness and there were conflicts with the native Indians. However, the settlers survived and a small town called Dunstable still exists in the state of Massachusetts, not too far from Bedford and Woburn!

Much later, in 1905, Robert and William Hambling, whose father was the last headmaster of Chew's School, emigrated to Canada and followed the Klondyke trail to the west. They founded a settlement near Lac La Nonne, in Alberta, which was named Dunstable. But when the railway opening up the way to the west coast bypassed the town it gradually declined and it has now virtually disappeared. The name Dunstable only exists today in the name of the school which serves the area round about.

Two other local men who went to America in more modern times were Joseph Freeman and Charles Cooper, of Houghton Regis. Joseph was a miller who went to the U.S., possibly in the 1850s, fought in the Civil War and later settled in Missouri, where he carried on his trade as a miller. His adventures may have influenced his nephew, Charles Cooper, to cross the Atlantic and settle in Montana. He became a judge, married an English lass, another emigrant, and they had two sons, Arthur and Frank. Frank, of course, is better known to us as Gary Cooper, the film star.

THE MARSHE FAMILY

In the early 18th century one member of the family, the young Francis Dickinson, joined the East India Company. He was posted to Mocha, then the centre of the coffee trade, and stayed there as the Company's agent for 14 years before coming back to this country to live (see article on page 312).

A later member of the family was Alexander Ball, Dickinson's great-nephew, who joined the Navy in his teens and by the age of 21 had attained the rank of lieutenant. He served alongside Nelson in the Mediterranean and at the Battle of the Nile as captain of the Alexander, was made an Admiral, and was later invited by the Maltese to become Governor of their Island. He died there in 1809, much loved by the local population, and there is still a memorial to him in the gardens in Valetta, the capital.



Admiral Sir Alexander John Ball,

SERVANTS OF THE CROWN

Another British Governor was Sir John Mooring, son of Arthur Mooring, editor of the Dunstable Gazette from 1895 to 1909. On leaving Cambridge he joined the Colonial Service and spent a number of years in Africa. In 1960 he was appointed Resident (Governor) of the island of Zanzibar, then a British protectorate and now part of Tanzania, until it gained independence. He was knighted in 1958 and died in England in 1969.

Three other Oxbridge graduates from Dunstable who went abroad were the older sons of William Jardine, who all went to India. William Jardine had come from Scotland and settled here in about 1840. All three of the boys took up posts in the judiciary of one state or another. Sadly two of them, William and Robert, died comparatively young, out in India, but the third, John, had a distinguished career, ending up as Chancellor of Bombay University. On his return to this country he was elected as M.P. for Roxburghshire. He, too, was knighted and became the First Baronet Jardine of Godalming. He died in 1919 and his oldest son succeeded to the baronetcy.

CONVICTS AND COLONISTS'

But not all of those who went abroad went willingly. In the 1800s 14 convicts from Dunstable were transported to Australia, 13 men and one woman, mostly convicted for what we would today consider minor crimes. The only one of whose life in Australia we know anything at all is the woman, Ann Cook. She was sent to work in a factory and was eventually married, though she died shortly afterwards.

There was one couple though who went out to New Zealand to seek their fortune, Esther and David Clarkson. They opened a small shop selling hats and sewing materials in Christchurch, a very successful business which was later named Dunstable House. After a time the Clarksons returned to England to start another business in London, and in May 1872 the original shop was bought by John Ballantyne, a Scotsman. Ballantynes, as it is now known, is today a 'prestigious' emporium. Badly damaged in the earthquake of 2011 it was one of the first shops in the city mall to reopen after rebuilding in 2012.

SUGAR AND RUM TRADE

Someone else who went out to seek his fortune, though in a different direction, was Samuel Queenborough, son of a Dunstable grocer, who went out to Jamaica. He became the owner of a sugar plantation, owning nearly 250 slaves, and was elected to the Honorable Assembly of Jamaica in 1803. He returned to this country at the end of his life and his memorial in Priory Church says he was deeply mourned as a 'humane benefactor' by 'a numerous tribe of dependents'.

The distillers of the Cart family, we know, must have traded with the West Indies in the 17th century, though there is no record of any of them having been out there, but significantly sugar cane is a prominent feature on their coat of arms.

CLERICS ABROAD

From the churches, three men and one woman went to work abroad in the 19th and 20th centuries. Two of the sons of the Revd. Hose, Rector of Dunstable Priory from 1844 to 1883, were ordained clergymen who served overseas. One was William,

who went out to the diocese of Australia and died out there in 1910. His brother, George Frederick, went out to Singapore and became first Archdeacon and, later, Bishop of Singapore. He died in England in 1922. The third man to go abroad was Revd. Sylvester Fowler, an army chaplain in World War I who later became a Methodist missionary and was tragically killed in a cyclone in Belize, at the age of 47. The woman was Ann Baldock, an Anglican missionary who taught in a girls' school in Pakistan for many years. On retirement she came back to Dunstable and spent her last years in Ladies Lodge, in Church Street.

20TH CENTURY TRAVELLERS

By the early 1900s many people were travelling abroad, but two Dunstable men deserve special mention. One was Thomas Bagshawe. As the result of a plan which went awry, at the age of 20 he and a Canadian marine spent a whole winter on their own in Antarctica, collecting scientific data. In a hut improvised from the wreck of an abandoned ship, with limited rations, and no means of communication with the outside world in those days (1921), they survived the winter and brought back valuable scientific information. The place where they had their base has been named Waterboat Point and a new plaque marking the spot was unveiled by the Princess Royal in 2007.



Thomas Bagshawe in Antarctica

The other was Admiral Sir Lionel Preston, a Dunstablian by adoption, who was called back from retirement in 1939 and master-minded the deployment of the 'little boats' for the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940. His lasting memorial in Dunstable is the Sea Scouts' Headquarters at the old mill in West Street. It was largely due to him that a branch of the Sea Scouts was formed in the town and he was instrumental in the acquisition of the mill for their Headquarters.



Admiral Sir Lionel Preston

EMINENT SPORTING DUNSTABLIANS

And in more recent times still, three women have carried the torch for Dunstable in sporting events around the world. Lisa Lomas (nee Bellinger), a table tennis player, competed in the Olympics in Barcelona in 1992 and Atlanta in 1996 and has won gold, silver and bronze medals in the Commonwealth Games. Andrea Holmes, world champion trampolinist whose career spanned almost 20 years, from 1978 to 1997, took part in the world championships at the age of 12. Jane Webster, Badminton champion, has represented England in international matches 85 times.

Quite an impressive list of achievements for a small town.

If you missed the exhibition in May, or would like to see it again, it will be on display in Dunstable Library in October. If you would like any more information about any of these people please ask at one of our History Society meetings or email j.curran21@btinternet.com or rita.swift1@ntlworld.com

Joan Curran

Violet Golding

In late August 1917, munitions worker Violet Golding, aged 17, became one of the youngest people to receive the newly constituted Medal of the Order of the British Empire.

The award followed an accident at George Kent's Chaul End munitions factory in Luton the previous June.

LOST FINGER AND THUMB

The accident, caused by a detonator exploding as the then 16-year-old leaned over to take it out of a press, resulted in a finger and thumb of her left hand having to be amputated and extensive burning to her arm.

She was a patient in Luton's Bute Hospital for three weeks and was off work for three months but then returned to a job in the department where the accident happened.

The Luton News of Thursday, August 30, 1917, reported that Violet was born in Wood Green, London, in 1900 but for the previous six years had lived at Cross Street in Dunstable with her mother and stepfather (Mr Sinfield). She was educated at Ashton School, Dunstable, afterwards being employed at Waterlow's Printing Works until, in 1916, "she responded to the call to feed the guns".

When a reporter asked the teenager if she could do the same job she did before the accident, she replied: "I used to be an inspector, but now I'm a Jack of all trades."

The first Violet knew about her honour was when her name appeared in the newspapers. She had received no notification from any Government office, and said: "I could not believe my eyes."



Violet Golding

Her first written confirmation was in a letter from Miss Edith Hammond, who superintended the welfare of the girls at the Kent's munitions factory.



HER NAME APPEARS IN THE TIMES

Miss Hammond wrote: "The Ministry of Munitions are distributing some medals to munitions workers who have rendered good service. I see in The Times newspaper that your name is among those to be honoured in this way. We always thought it plucky of you to come back to work as you did. I am very glad that you should be the girl here to get this medal. Please accept my congratulations."

The Luton News remarked that it understood there were other munitions workers who had been marred by serious accidents such as the loss of hands, and they too had returned to the firm. It was to be hoped that they would be included in the next honours list.

Violet's courage so impressed the George Kent directors that they also awarded her £50, part of which she used to buy a bicycle to use instead of walking to and from work.

MEETING THE KING

And when King George V visited the factory on November 13, 1917, Violet was introduced to the monarch. The King congratulated Violet on her medal and asked: "Is your hand better?"

The King asked another youngster in the workshops how many of the detonators she turned out in a day.

The girl replied shyly: "I don't know, sir. We don't count. We just carry on." "Capital," replied the King.

Violet was formally handed her medal at Dunstable Town Hall in 1918 by the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire.

David Ainsbury

Francis Dickinson

In the south aisle of the Dunstable Priory Church, there is a memorial bearing the following inscription:

Near this place lie the Remains
Of FRANCIS DICKINSON Esq.,

(A Son of JOHN and ELIZABETH DICKINSON
and a great Grandson of Francis
and Rebecca Marshe
deceased)

Who after presiding many Years
in Mocha in Arabia

as Chief under the east India Company of England,
and acquitting himself in that Station with
great Honour and Integrity returned to his
Native Country

Where he lived in Universal
Esteem, and dyed a bachelor,

November 13th 1747

In the 46th Year of his Age much Lamented.



*The memorial to Francis Dickinson in
Dunstable Priory Church*

A RELATIVE OF THE ASHTONS, CARTS AND CHEWS

Francis Dickinson died on 13th November 1747 'in the 46th year of his age', meaning he was still 45 at the time. He was born in 1702, in Dunstable, a relative of Frances Ashton, Jane Cart and William Chew and older brother of Marshe Dickinson MP. The Dickinsons were evidently a wealthy and well connected family, for on 7th December 1720, Francis wrote a letter in London to the Court of the Directors of the East India Company. He requested permission to carry £200 of foreign silver out of the country and take it with him to Mocha, where they had offered him a post. Mocha was recorded as early as 1450 as the port from which Asian coffee was exported to Europe. In 1601 John Lancaster led the first East India Company voyage, from Torbay to Sumatra.

Mocha is on the coast of the Red Sea, in what is now Yemen. The East India Company used it as one of their assembly ports for the produce of Asia, where it was warehoused and re-packaged before onward transmission. The route was round the Cape of Good Hope as the Suez Canal was not yet constructed. Mocha also handled goods from Britain on their way eastward.

EAST INDIA COMPANY AGENT

Francis was the Company's agent in Mocha and was in regular correspondence with the Directors in London. From 1721 onwards, he informed them of cargoes sent, the ships they were on and the dates of dispatch; lists of stores requested; personnel at the Station and lists of current prices. Francis was the main signatory from 1721 until 15th December 1734. Mocha was also part of the British Intelligence Service, sending reports on the movement of French, Spanish and Dutch vessels. The local currency was 'Pieces of Eight' (the Spanish dollar), with an exchange rate of about two to the £1. Other ports mentioned are Bombay, Pondicherry, Aden, Batavia (Jakarta) and Surat. In the 1720s there was an average of sixteen ships a month docking at Mocha. Coffee was the main export westward, the Arabian coffee arriving by

camel from Bayt al-Hafiq, ninety miles to the north-east. Other commodities included spices, silk, sandalwood, rice, aloes, coconuts, rope, 'coire', pepper, sugar, ostrich feathers, camphor 'tabacco' dyes and candles. Among the more exotic items there was myrrh, spikenard and dragon's blood. The latter was a red resin used variously as varnish, dye, incense and medicine. There is mention of 2,500 bales of coffee on a single ship. Goods being traded eastward included, iron, steel, lead, mercury and broad cloth. Some ships carried paying passengers.

Francis Dickinson sent annual reports and accounts to both London and Bombay. The Directors sent an annual reply with comments and instructions for the year to come. He tried to buy at the cheapest price and sell in times of shortage. He was responsible for the monthly Steward's Accounts which gave details of food, wages and stabling expenses. The food mostly consisted of greens, milk, onions, eggs, peppers, limes, chicken and pigeon, with occasional mutton or beef. There ten 'European' soldiers stationed at Mocha. Francis Dickinson is first listed as a Factor in

1722 on an annual 'all found' salary of £15. This is equivalent to about £40,000 these days. Lower levels were paid in Spanish dollars.

A LOCAL UPRISING

In 1727 there was a local uprising and the Europeans had to flee. Francis Dickinson was sent back with instructions to send his 'linguist' ashore to find out if it was safe to land and to find the 1,500 bales of coffee which the Company had paid for but which had to be abandoned in Mocha. They sent the 'bomb ketch' Salamander, with soldiers, in support. As a last resort, he was to blockade the port. He later reported that he found all was peaceful and that the coffee was still in the warehouse. He brokered an agreement with the local imam that Mocha would be an English Free Port but that the Company would pay 3% on all goods to the Mocha Government.

From 1729 onwards Francis Dickinson is listed on ships' manifests as a trader in his own right. In 1731 the Directors recommended that he be taken 'into the Council'. He then began to travel around Arabia as the Company's representative and to send his reports to Mocha, from where they were forwarded to London and Bombay. He also travelled, with his linguist, to Aleppo 'Grand Cairo' and the Cape of Good Hope. He was also paid expenses for making arrangements, such as the transportation of troops. His last title was 'Commissary for the Affairs of the Honourable East India Company In Arabia'. Part of his job was to check scales (weights and measures) and that local officials were not being bribed too highly.

A HANDSOME PENSION FOR HIS SERVICES

Francis Dickinson sailed for England on the 'Willmington' on 23rd January 1735. He is listed in the 'Guide to London' in 1740 as a merchant, with premises near St. Thomas Apostle' in Queen Street, Cheapside. He used his Mocha contacts to trade in Arabian goods. He was well paid by the East India Company and given a handsome pension. He died, unmarried, in Dunstable and was honoured by the splendid monument which can be seen in the south aisle of Dunstable Priory Church.

Hugh Garrod

Gentleman Harry – Highwayman



Although Gentleman Harry Highwayman was not born in Dunstable the town proved to be his downfall.

Henry Simms was born c. 1717 in London, but orphaned at a young age he was sent to live with his grandmother. She doted on him and sent him to an academy where he proved a good scholar, learning to read and write including some French and Latin.

CRIMINAL TENDENCIES

At an early age he showed criminal tendencies continually stealing from his grandmother, shopkeepers and friends. Frequently falling into bad company and getting drunk he was robbed of money and clothes but always returned to his grandmother who continued to forgive him.

Finally an apprenticeship with a breeches-maker was arranged but Simms did not last long in this position, running away after first stealing clothes from his grandmother's house which he sold. Eventually this good lady went to live at the house of Lady Stanhope but Simms followed her and robbed the house. Her patience was finally exhausted. This was the end of the relationship with his grandmother who would have nothing more to do with her incorrigible grandson.

Returning to crime he was arrested as a pickpocket, and was fortunate to escape transportation. Several of his acquaintances were transported and, fearing that he might meet the same fate, Simms managed to secure himself a position as a coach driver for an innkeeper and soon moved on to driving the carriage of a nobleman.

HE BECOMES A HIGHWAYMAN

Unable to resist a life of crime he became a highwayman. With his education, silver-hilted sword, which he displayed over a discreet suit of black velvet, he became known in the underworld as 'Gentleman Harry'.

Stopping a London bound coach, he robbed the occupant of 102 guineas, more than most people earned in a year at the time, and the money was quickly spent on the gaming tables in London. But there he was recognised by the coach driver. However, Simms successfully bribed him with five shillings to keep quiet.

TRANSPORTATION

A reward was put up for his capture and to avoid arrest he signed on first as a privateer and then as a soldier but gave both up very quickly. Finally his luck ran out and he was arrested for robbing a baker's shop and sentenced to be transported. Arriving in Maryland, he was sold as an indentured servant for 12 guineas, but almost immediately escaped, stealing his master's horse and riding for the coast. There he was taken on as a seaman and offered six guineas to work the ship back to England. The ship was captured by the French, but the crew was ransomed and Simms got work on a man o' war again. Once he arrived in port in England he deserted.

A DRINK IN DUNSTABLE PROVES HIS UNDOING

Simms went back to his life of crime and carried out a series of robberies but wasted his money on prostitutes and riotous living. Whilst in St. Albans, after a very successful period, he decided to quit the road and live like a gentleman planning to go to Dublin and sell his large collection of jewels. A second and then a third bottle of wine changed his mind and proved to be his downfall, as calling

for his horse he took to the road for one last time. At Redbourn he again pulled off four robberies before stealing a fresh horse. Still encouraged by the drink he robbed the Warrington Stage. At Dunstable, he entered the Bull Inn, unbeknown to him the very inn the Warrington Coach was heading for. Having just ordered a brandy he was shaken to see the passengers he had recently robbed entering the inn. He just made it out in time and hurried on through the rain to Hockcliffe where he collapsed into a drunken sleep by a kitchen fire. But he had been spotted, pursued and easily captured.

Being confined for that night, he was brought before a magistrate, who committed him to Bedford Jail. By an unaccountable neglect his pistol had not been taken from him, and on his way to prison he attempted to shoot one of his guards; but the pistol misfired, his hands were tied behind him; and when he arrived at the prison he was fastened to the floor, with an iron collar round his neck.

UNTIL DEATH DO THEM PART

He was transferred to London and having been sentenced to death for highway robbery was committed to Newgate to await execution. Whilst there he met and fell in love with a fellow prisoner Mary Allen. She was a 26 years old shoplifter. The morning of their execution they went first to Chapel, then down into the Press-Yard where they had their fetters knocked off, finally being conveyed to Tyburn. Simms was cleanly dressed in a white fustian frock, white stockings, and white drawers; and just as he got into the cart at Newgate, threw off his shoes. As the couple were about to be hanged, Gentleman Harry joined hands with Mary Allen. The date 17th of November, 1747.

In his favour he was never known to actually shoot anyone and never took a trinket knowing it to be of sentimental value. As a man he had many faults but he was a highwayman among rakes, and a rake among highwaymen.

Rita Swift

This story was compiled from various internet sources



Greeting New Members

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

Mr and Mrs Cullen
Graham Horton
Roger and Lena Renders
John Stevens
Mrs Enid Holmes
Mrs Karin Kaye
Derek Sayers

Zachary Symmes



Zachary Symmes was born in Canterbury on 5th April 1599, spending his early years there.

RECTOR OF DUNSTABLE

His father was an ordained vicar who had sympathies with the non-conformist movement. Zachary attended Emanuel College, Cambridge and his first employment was as tutor to children of the patron of his father's church. He was then invited to train for the ministry at St. Antolin's, where he was taught to base services and sermons on the bible. Zachary became rector of Dunstable in 1625. He already had a wife and a young daughter by this time. His salary was £20 pa plus the rent of his house. He was rector for nine years, during which time his wife gave birth to seven more children. William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury from 1633 to 1646, was determined to drive out clergy with non-conformist sympathies. Such clergy were likely to lose their living and were in danger of being imprisoned. It seems that Zachary was already considering emigration to America. Symmes and his family set sail on The Griffin on 1st August 1634. His eldest daughter, Sarah was nine years old, the youngest, Rebecca, was under six months. Conditions on board were very insanitary, many families taking their own livestock with them. The Symmes family were lucky; the voyage took only seven weeks. The Griffin arrived in Boston on 18th September. Their destination was Charlestown, just across the river.

CHARLESTOWN

The early settlers in Charlestown had to start from scratch, planning and building a township from nothing. The first three years had been an horrendous experience of failing crops and epidemics. Many early settlers went back across the river to Boston, as the water supply was better. The first stone building in Charlestown was the Great House, which acted both as Church and Town Hall. By 1632 they had their own pastor, who was qualified in law and also the magistrate. The second pastor, Mr. James, was unpopular with the people, so a letter had been sent to England requesting an assistant. This had resulted in Zachary being sent out. Zachary and his family had a house provided for them when they arrived. It was opposite the Great House and had two acres of land as well as a share in a cornfield on the outskirts of the town. There were 72 families in Charlestown, containing about 300 people. 200 years later, there was still a part of Charlestown known as Symmes Corner.



FREEMAN OF THE TOWN

The diet was a mixture of foods brought from England and those that were available locally. Zachary must have been much liked by his new community as he was made a freeman of the town on 6th May 1635. It was decided in the following year that Mr. James should move to another community and that Zachary should be pastor. He continued in that role for 30 years. By 1640 there were almost 1000 people living in Charlestown. Zachary helped to set up a church in nearby Woburn. He attended local Synods. By 1648 he was earning £90 pa, a top salary at that time. One of the teachers in Charlestown, Revd John Harvard, arrived in 1637. He died of consumption in September 1638 and made a death bed bequest which led to the establishment of Harvard University.

Symmes was pastor until he died in February 1671, aged 71. He was buried with honour in the town he served so well. His epitaph said,

A prophet lies beneath this stone; His words shall live, though he is gone. He had many descendants, among them captains, lieutenant colonels, businessmen and judges. One, Anna Symmes, married William Henry Harrison who later became the 9th President of the United States of America. He died of pneumonia after only a month in office, the shortest ever Presidency. His grandson, Benjamin Harrison was the 23rd President, serving a full term, from 4th March 1889 till 4th March 1893.

To this day, there is a Dunstable Street in Charlestown. Dunstable Priory is still visited by people from Massachusetts who find it hard to believe that their firebrand preacher, Zachary Symmes, was once a Rector in the Church of England.

Hugh Garrod

Lt.-Col. Henderson

An extensive article on Dunstable in the First World War can be read on our website.

One particular event which is missing from that account is the award of a Victoria Cross for most conspicuous bravery, leadership and personal example to an Old Boy of Dunstable Grammar School, Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Elers Delaval Henderson

Lt.-Col. Henderson, aged 38, born in British India, was in command of the 9th Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment, fighting the Turks in Mesopotamia (now Iraq).

On January 25 1917 he brought his battalion up to our two front-line trenches on the west bank of the River Hai near Ket. The trenches were under intense fire and there had been heavy casualties. The enemy made a heavy counter-attack, and succeeded in penetrating the British line in several places, the situation becoming critical.



Lt.-Col. Henderson

He was buried in the Amara War Cemetery.

Although shot through the arm, Lt.-Col. Henderson jumped onto the parapet and advanced alone some distance in front of his battalion, cheering them on under the most intense fire over 500 yards of open ground.

Again wounded, he nevertheless continued to lead his men on in the most gallant manner, finally capturing the position by a bayonet charge.

He was again twice wounded, and died when he was eventually brought in.



John Buckledee

Wellington Terrace Water Pump



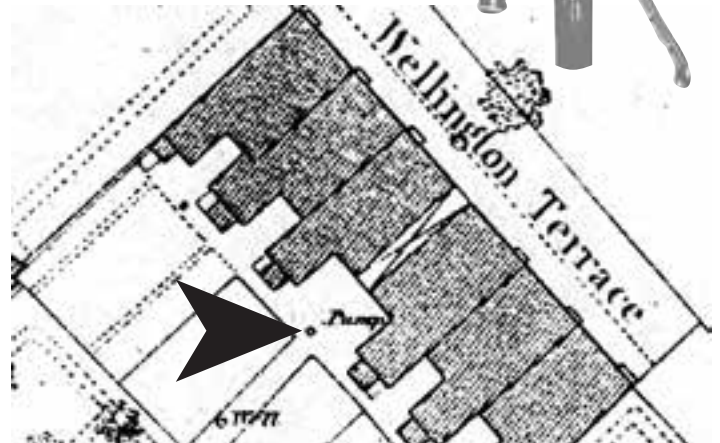
In Newsletter No. 39 dated February 2013, in an article **About Wellington Terrace I reproduced a portion of the 1880 Ordnance Survey showing the Terrace.**

On the map, a pump was shown to the rear of numbers 3 and 4. Recently, whilst digging the footings for an extension at number 4, a builder unearthed a brick-lined cavity in the place where the pump was shown on the map. It's difficult to know whether this beehive-shaped cavity was a well or a cistern, fed from the well shown a few yards away on the map. The cavity was about 6 feet deep but what the original depth was is difficult to determine, as there was a lot of rubble at the bottom. There would have been an iron pump sitting on top to draw the water and would have been shared by all the residents of Wellington Terrace.

The builder working on the extension was impressed by the quality of the craftsmanship of the domed brickwork, which is just as well, as the apex was just a few millimetres from the surface of the passageway, over which people have been walking for many years, oblivious of the cavity beneath their feet.

I presume that the brickwork is contemporary with Wellington Terrace itself, which I believe to date from 1853, the year the Duke of Wellington died. I was pleased to be able to see evidence of the original water supply exposed which confirmed the accuracy of the 1880 Ordnance Survey. It gave me the opportunity to take some photographs before it was filled in and hidden from view once more for the foreseeable future.

David Turner



The arrow indicates the pump on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map



The top of the domed brickwork with the cavity beneath

Memories of old Dunstable

Perhaps members will be interested in one anecdote emerging from the answer to a query about an old bakehouse in Hockliffe which has now been converted into a shop selling vintage motorcycles.

LOCAL BAKERS

We were able to find an article about local bakers by Dunstable historian Thomas Bagshawe, which records the work of Marjorie and Florrie Grove, of Hockliffe, who were producing "long tin", "sandwich" and "high top" loaves, among other varieties, up until 1953.

They were carrying on the work of their dad, Alfred Grove, who took over the bakery from Joseph Hack in about 1903 and ran it until his death in 1938. He was nicknamed the "midnight baker" because of the late hour at which he delivered bread around the village. If they had already gone to bed before he called, villagers left their windows open so he could put the loaves inside. Trusting days!

REAL DOUGHNUTS

Thomas Bagshawe had fond memories of his time at Dunstable Grammar School where his classmate was Frank Cooper, who later became famous as Gary Cooper, the film star. Mr Bagshawe recalled that a baker opposite the school made doughnuts, or

"dough-cakes", which were sold in the school's tuckshop at break-time for a farthing each. They would be piping hot, he wrote, and had plenty of real jam inside, "not an apologetic smear as nowadays".

HOCKLEY IN THE HOLE

Hockliffe has, understandably, changed its name from the original Hockley in the Hole, which was a notoriously muddy and unpleasant part of the stagecoach journey down the Watling Street.

Daniel Defoe, of Robinson Crusoe fame, called it "the most dismal Piece of Ground for Travelling that was ever in England".

"From the top of the chalky hill beyond Dunstable down into Hockley Lane and through Hockley, justly called Hockley in the Hole... such a road for Coaches as worse was hardly ever seen."



Thomas Bagshawe

continued overleaf

Memories of old Dunstable continued



A BOY CALLED GUTTERIDGE

Another classmate of Thomas Bagshawe and Gary Cooper was a boy called Gutteridge, who has a claim to fame in that he won a 220-yard race at the grammar school in which Cooper finished second, the only time the future film star was mentioned in the school magazine. This lad was almost certainly John Henry Gutteridge (forenames were not used in the school in those days). John was the son of Richard William Gutteridge, of West Street, who was described as a warehouseman in the 1911 census. Barry Gutteridge, of Canada, who is researching his ancestors, provided us with those details.

EVACUEE

We were able to help David Janes, from Taunton, who is putting together a collection of World War Two memories for his local Rotary Club.

David was evacuated to Dunstable, aged six, during the war and lived in Luton Road. He remembers bunking off school in about 1944 to see the crater left by a V1 which came down between Poynters Road and the hospital. He got a burst tyre and a good telling off as a result.

Just two V1 missiles hit this area during the war. The area up to the hospital was just open fields at the time, so no-one was hurt in that particular incident.

WAVING GERMAN BOMBER

There is a lovely war-time story about another local lad who was on top of Blow's Downs when some German bombers flew past very low, following the line of hills towards Luton. He was a close enough to see the pilot who stared at him and then waved. The startled boy automatically waved back.

INGENIOUS SOLUTION

These days we regularly have to give talks about the war to local schoolchildren, for whom a baby's gas mask kept at the old Moore's shop in Dunstable is an object of great fascination. We speak about the sirens warning of bombing raids, and the way in which the white lion at Whipsnade and the town hall at Luton were camouflaged to make it difficult for the bombers to find their targets. One little lad listened carefully, and then suggested that all the pilots had to do was lower their window and aim towards the sound of the sirens!

AUDIO RECORD

A group from Bedford Creative Arts has been busy meeting local people and preparing an audio record of their memories. Starting points for what becomes a feast of nostalgia are recollections of sounds and smells. So we have heard about the smell of horse manure from the old riding stables at Kingsbury, the lowing of cattle from the market at the Square and the hiss of air compressors on the shop floor at Commer's.

THE OLD ROYAL OAK

A common theme has been the remarkable freedom to roam the town which children enjoyed not so long ago. But one place where they were NOT allowed was the bar of the local pub. So



The Old Royal Oak in Church Street

there are many memories of sitting on the steps outside places like the old Royal Oak in Church Street with a bag of crisps while mum and dad had a drink inside. And it was common to be sent down to the local shop to buy a packet of cigarettes for mum. No problem in those innocent days about being served.

SNOWDROP POSIES

The walk to work at AC-Delco was sometimes interrupted by the passing of a steam train across Brewers Hill Road on its way to Leighton Buzzard. And one lady has an affectionate memory of working at Houghton Hall for Colonel Dealtry Part and helping his wife to pick snowdrops there to make into posies. These were sold for one penny per bunch in aid of the Red Cross. The grounds of the hall are now, of course, a very attractive park which is well worth a visit.

Col Part was Master of the Hertfordshire Hunt whose hounds were kept near the hall, hence the colloquial name Dog Kennel Path for the route to Dunstable. The kennels were situated on what is now the top of Woodlands Avenue, off the Green.

HARRISON CARTER ENGINEERING WORKS

Investigations into the route taken by lorries to reach the Harrison Carter engineering works in Bull Pond Lane, during the years when the lane was just a muddy track, came to the conclusion that they went down Garden Road before that was made one-way. There was once a large sign painted on the side of a house on the corner of Garden Road to show drivers where to turn. Bull Pond Lane ended at what is now just a sharp corner at the top of Periwinkle Lane. This was before the housing estates were built over the lower slopes of the downs, and the lane became a through route into the Lowther and Langdale roads.

QUESTIONS?

Questions we have not yet been able to answer include: Who planted the beech trees alongside Green Lane? And why is a house in Regent Street, dated 1899, decorated with the Star of David? There WAS a synagogue in a yard off High Street North, behind what was once the greengrocer's run by Mr Green, but this would have been of a much-later date.

John Buckledee