

NEWSLETTER

Dunstable & District Local History Society
No. 46 August 2016



Chairman's Notes

Rita Swift's book, *Dunstable Timeline*, has now been published by the history society. I hope by now you have all bought a copy!

The Timeline has grown like Topsy over the past six or seven years. It started when we decided to create a website for the society, and it was felt that a Timeline of the town should be a feature of this.

Rita undertook to assemble whatever dated events we could find, using as a base the list provided in Worthington Smith's history of Dunstable, and then adding dates from a variety of other sources.

Needless to say, when the Timeline went public on the website we received lots of comments, mainly from people whose particular interests had been overlooked. No problem about solving this on an internet site...we could easily add extra information whenever it became available.

REQUESTS FOR PRINT-OUTS

We are now reacting to requests from schools for print-outs of the list. Our original idea was to run off a dozen or so copies on A4 sheets direct from our computer and then hand-staple the pages together. But experiments with running Rita's text on to pages brought the realisation that we could create a professional-looking booklet on computer quite inexpensively and without the risk of a large up-front cost.

Our aim was to produce the booklet rapidly, so that it would be on sale in time for what was once called the annual History Day in Priory Gardens. And with the deadline fast approaching, a determined Rita set out to make the Timeline as comprehensive as possible. She astonished us by uncovering hundreds of extra facts, to such an extent that it became impractical to staple all the pages together like a magazine.

Luckily, we have a printing guru on our team named David Turner, who pointed us in the direction of a format called Canadian half-binding and found a firm which could do the job.

A HANDSOME BOOK

The result is a handsome, 86-page book with a glossy, colour cover which we can sell at the astonishingly low price of £5. We have had only a small number printed because if these all sell fairly quickly we can bring out another edition in time for Christmas which can include



One soldier commemorated on the Grammar School war memorial is 'Teddy' Thring, only son of the school's headmaster, who died in 1917 while serving in the army. These photographs of the funeral outside the school and the Priory Church were published in the Luton News.

the extra information which is emerging all the time. That's the joy of small-circulation publications produced on computers.

TERRY OLIVER

Sad to report the death of Terry Oliver, chairman of the Caddington History Society, who has given talks at our meetings on a number of occasions. Terry was intensely interested in the events surrounding the two World Wars and had accumulated a number of files about the local members of the armed forces who took part. These included the paperwork created when Dunstable Rotary Club, of which he was a member, had helped assemble the lists of names honoured on Dunstable's War Memorial.

Terry passed this material on to the Dunstable History Society and the newest member of our committee, David Underwood, has now started the task of sorting this into a more-accessible format. It was a real pity that Terry died just as this work began.

THE DUNSTABLE GRAMMAR SCHOOL BUILDING

Your society has been involved to a small degree in providing information about the Dunstable Grammar School building and its history, to help conservation experts in their report to the council. The school site has been judged as no longer needed for educational purposes, and will almost certainly be used for dwellings.

FIRST WORLD WAR MEMORIAL

One aspect which particularly struck us was the style and beauty of the school's library, built as a memorial to the former pupils who died in the First World War. A list of the Old Dunstablians who died in World War Two was added later.

It had seemed likely that only a section of the library could be saved, but we were delighted to find that the proposed developers of the site, Weston Homes, are aiming to preserve the room for community use. The main building, incorporating its distinctive assembly hall, would also be retained with its architectural features intact but converted into dwellings.

It's early days yet, and things can change, but if the building can no longer be used as a school it seems that this is an acceptable outcome.

John Buckledee

Bedfordshire and the Gunpowder Plot



In 2013 Richard Thomas gave a talk about Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot to members of the South Beds National Trust. He mentioned that Catesby one of the conspirators had come through Dunstable stopping because his horse had thrown a shoe. After the meeting, Rita Swift requested for more details of the incident. As a result, it transpired it hadn't been fully researched by historians, so he embarked on a project which took 3 years and we are grateful to him for allowing us to reproduce his article in our newsletter.

It all began even before Guy Fawkes was surprised holding a watch, a slow fuse and a tinder-box, on that fateful night.

Various servants of the conspirators were already making their way through the county of Bedfordshire.

The King's Book is a collection of the 300 most important papers, confessions, statements and letters which have been assembled into two volumes which are held in the vaults of the National Archives at Kew. A study of the King's Book and other State Papers from 411 years ago reveals the details of those men and where they were going and where some of them stayed.

Whilst the story of Guy Fawkes is well known, perhaps some of the other events of the 4th and 5th November are less widely appreciated.

FIVE CONSPIRATORS

When the Plot was conceived early in 1604, there were just five men in the group of conspirators, Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, Guy Fawkes, John Wright and Thomas Winter. Catesby was the originator and his second-in-command was Percy.

By the time Guy Fawkes was arrested, just after midnight on Tuesday, November 5th, there were no less than thirteen plotters. Six of them were in central London, awaiting the explosion. Catesby, his retainers Thomas Bate and John Wright, had left the previous evening. They were heading to the village of Dunchurch in Warwickshire. There they would meet up with another plotter, Sir Everard Digby. The plan was that they would go to Coombe Abbey near Coventry and kidnap 9-year-old Princess Elizabeth, King James' daughter, who was being educated there. She would have been the only surviving member of the royal family and could be used to bring about their aims.

RESTORE CATHOLICISM

They wanted to restore Catholicism as the national religion, not co-existing with Protestantism but replacing it. They reckoned the shock of their actions would upset the equilibrium of the country. They felt that, by using the powerful, now unsuppressed (and, presumably grateful) Catholic nobility, they would be able bring about the changes they wanted, by creating a largely pro-Catholic replacement government.

BEDFORDSHIRE

The men remaining in London (Percy, Christopher Wright, Thomas Winter, Ambrose Rookwood, Robert Keyes and Francis Tresham) became aware that the plot had gone awry. News spread that a warrant had been issued for the arrest of Thomas Percy. Percy left London before dawn on November 5th, with Christopher Wright (John Wright's brother), to chase after

Catesby, to tell him of Fawkes's arrest. Robert Keyes fled at about 9.30 a.m., followed half an hour later by Sir Ambrose Rookwood. They all followed the same route over Highgate Hill to South Mimms, then to St Albans and into Bedfordshire on Watling Street. Francis Tresham remained in London, to be arrested on the 12th November.

However, the first men we are going to meet in Bedfordshire are servants. John Story and William Johnson were arrested and interrogated by John Boteler and Nicholas Potts, both Justices of the County of Bedfordshire. They summarised the situation in a letter to Lord Salisbury, the King's chief minister and Principal Secretary of State, dated Friday 8th November, 1605: ¹ "wee have this presente day taken the examination of John Story and Willm Johnson lyeing at Hocklyff in this County of Beds, either of them keeping there sithence [since] munday last two horses likely for steady employment. Whereupon Story after being examined confessed himself to be servant to Thomas Percy which Thomas Percy passed downwards through Hocklyff on Tuisday last".

SWANNE INN

In Story's statement ² he confirmed that Thomas Percy and Christopher Wright came to the Swanne Inn and exchanged their tired geldings for the fresh horses, and left without staying for any food.

William Johnson, who was a servant to Robert Keyes, came " on Monday to the Swanne in Hocklyff where he hath continued ever sithence w[i]th the sayd horse and gelding. He bringeth but one sadle with him, And he mindeth to stay there until he see or here from his master (and) gyveth his two horses half a bushel a day of otes" ³ It seems that Robert Keyes did not call at the Swanne for a fresh horse but rode onward to his destination at Drayton, Northants, where he went to join his wife and where he was later arrested. (The Swan Inn was demolished some years ago, it was opposite Hockliffe Methodist Church).

Robert Askew was a servant of Robert Catesby. "On Monday the 4 he came to Dunstable, on Tewsday the 5 to Banbury...". ⁴ He was on his way along the Watling Street, from London to Coughton Court, near Alcester in Warwickshire. Coughton was (and still is) the home of the Throckmortons, a devout Catholic family. They had rented the house to Sir Everard Digby, another of the conspirators.



A section of a map produced in 1960 as part of a parish survey of Hockliffe published by the Planning Department of Beds County Council showing the location of the now demolished Swan Inn

Robert Conyers was a servant to Ambrose Rookwood. Rookwood was a wealthy gentleman, brought into the plot only two months before, to provide much needed finance. “This examinant saith he came from London to Dunstable on Monday night last and from thence in all hast came to have mett his said master att Norbrooke ...neere Warwick”⁵

Christopher Ater, another of Ambrose Rookwood’s servants “came out of London on Mondaye in the forenoone, and came that night to Dunstable, and there lodged at the White Harte, where he mett with George Bartlett, Robert Catesbies man.”⁶

RED LYON DUNSTABLE

Ater’s statement is partly confirmed by George Bartlett concerning the meeting but he “saith he mett w[i]th one Christofer Ater, Mr Rookwoods man at an Inne at Dunstable at the Red Lyon”⁷. Both these men were questioned on 6th November, so it is perhaps surprising that they remembered different hostelries. However, they were probably confused and terrified at being arrested and then interrogated by three powerful officials - Sir Richard Verney, High Sheriff of Warwickshire, Sir John Ferrers, MP and William Combes, esquire.

During the afternoon and evening of the 4th November, five men left London and made their way north-westwards. First to leave, at about 4 o’clock, were Henry Hurleston and his servant, William Thornbury and they “came to St. Albans to bedd to the signe of the bull”. This was probably The Bull that still remains at London Colney. The other three men comprised the plotters we have already met, Robert Catesby and his retainer Thomas Bate, together with John Wright. They left the Strand in central London at about 7 p.m. and came to St Albans at about midnight. They rested at an inn there, unaware that Fawkes had been taken in the early hours. It is probable that Bate left very early in the morning and rode directly to Ashby St Ledgers, Catesby’s family home in Northamptonshire; he doesn’t reappear in the narrative of this journey through Bedfordshire, although he certainly rode through the county along Watling Street.

CAST A SHOE IN DUNSTABLE

We pick up the story again in the document dated 8th November, entitled “The Examination of Henry Hurleston...”⁸, where we learn that, “in St. Albans John Wryght came, and presently after mr Robin Catesby overtooke him upon tewsdays morninge [5th November] and they rode in company to Dunstable where mr Catesbies horse cast a shoe, and there this exa[minal]t[e] stayed with him till his horse was shod, mr Wryght rydinge on before



A contemporary engraving of eight of the thirteen conspirators, by Crispijn van de Passe – Digby, Keyes, Rookwood, Grant, and Tresham are missing

to Brickhill where this examine and mr Catesbie overtook him and there they bayted [ate] together staying there some hour....”

Thomas Percy and Christopher Wright fleeing from London now come into the picture: “...whither came rydinge in twoo gentlemen; the one he knoweth to be one percye to whom mr Catesbie went downe and spake with him, in whose company mr Catesbie and mr Wryght went presentelye away”

The only plotter missing is Ambrose Rookwood. We can pick up his journey from his own confession “...and overtook Keyes by the waye abo[u]t 3 miles beyond Highgate and overtook Catesby & John Wright beyond Brickhill. A little before he overtooke Percy & Christopher Wright & saith that he rode 30 miles of one horse in 2 houres “⁹

PASSING THROUGH BEDFORDSHIRE

This narrative tells the story of men passing through Bedfordshire, using the old Roman road, some of them traitors, who plotted to wipe out the government and monarchy; some of them their innocent servants. Their fates are recorded.

John Story, William Johnson, Robert Conyers, Christopher Ater, George Bartlett and Hurleston’s man, William Thornbury were questioned and released. The unfortunate Henry Hurleston, vehemently protested his innocence, despite having met several of the conspirators in London and then meeting and riding with them on November 5th. He insisted that he knew nothing of the Plot, nor was it ever spoken of during their ride. He spent several months locked up in the Marshalsea Prison before eventually being released. Francis Tresham was imprisoned in the Tower but died from illness on 22nd December 1605

Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, and John and Christopher Wright all died in the firefight which followed when soldiers surrounded the manor house at Holbeach in Staffordshire, on November 8th, where they had taken refuge. Thomas Winter and Ambrose Rookwood were arrested there. Sir Everard Digby and Thomas Bate were tracked down and arrested later. They (and the remaining members of the thirteen) were tried in Westminster Hall on 27th January 1606 and found guilty of treason.

HANGED, DRAWN AND QUARTERED

They were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. On 30th January, Sir Everard Digby, Robert Winter (Thomas’s brother), John Grant and Thomas Bate were executed outside the west end of St Paul’s Cathedral. The following day, Thomas Winter, Ambrose Rookwood, Robert Keyes and Guy Fawkes suffered a similar fate outside the House of Lords at Westminster.

Footnotes

All the following references are to documents held at the National Archives at Kew. However, digital copies can be provided by the author. Contact thrifthouse@ntlworld.com

- 1 SP14/16.f58 Letter, Justices of Bedfordshire to Lord Salisbury
- 2 SP14/16.ff59-64 Examination of John Story
- 3 SP14/16.ff65-66 Examination of William Johnson
- 4 SP14/216/1.f78 Examination of Robert Askew
- 5 SP14/216/1.f52 Examination of Robert Conyers
- 6 SP14/216/1.f53 Examination of Christopher Ater
- 7 SP14/216/1.f54 Examination of George Bartlett
- 8 SP14/16.ff54-55 Examination of Henry Hurleston
- 9 SP14/216/2.ff50-51 Examination of Ambrose Rookwood

Richard Thomas

The family of George Griffin



THE LAST MASTER OF CHEW'S SCHOOL

When William Hambling died in 1898, the Trustees appointed George Griffin, on a temporary basis.

The number of boys had fallen to 14 and by 1905, when the school finally shut, there were only three left. George Griffin was born in Fulham on March 23rd 1847, the second of five children born to Charles and Ann Griffin between 1846 and 1855. In 1861 the family is living in High Street, Fulham. Charles is a widower and holding the post of Parish Constable. Twenty years later he is still described as Beadle of Fulham. George's first employment was as a teacher in Finsbury.

In 1871 George Griffin was appointed Headmaster of Penang Free School, a post he held for 25 years, returning to England in 1896. In 1883 George married Miss Matilda Bessie Elliott, the fourth of eleven children born to William Oliver and Charlotte Elizabeth Elliott. Matilda was born in Dunstable in 1859. She was well educated and went to finishing school in Paris. George and Matilda were married in Penang. While in Penang, George compiled an English/Malay dictionary. This was first published in 1880 and further extended in 1888.

William Oliver Elliott was a Dunstable hat manufacturer. He was born in Dunstable in 1831. His wife, Charlotte Elizabeth, nee Ginger, was born in The Manor House, Slapton, one of thirteen children born to Martha and Thomas Willis Ginger. In 1881 the Elliott family are living in Turnpike Road, Houghton Regis. The eldest son is a soldier in the 2nd Life Guards and Matilda is listed as 'organist'. Her second youngest brother, Percy, was a composer, violinist and conductor. He wrote light orchestral pieces which were much in demand for the silent cinema. William Oliver was appointed a local JP in 1889. In 1902 he was visiting his son, Revd David Lee Elliott, in Lewes, when he was taken ill in a shop

doorway and died before they could get him to the hospital across the road. William Oliver's younger brother, Henry was the architect of Dunstable Town Hall and Christ Church, Luton. The Tower Doors in the Priory Church were donated by George Elliott KC, of the Inner Temple, a cousin of Matilda Bessie. For more details of the Elliott family, see Joan Curran's 'Straw Hats & Bonnets'.

In the 1891 Census, Matilda Bessie is living in Priory Road with four of their five children. George is, apparently, in Penang with the oldest girl. The two oldest children are listed as born in 'Straits settlements' (Penang), while the youngest three, aged 3, 1 and a few months, are born in Dunstable. Ten years later, George and his wife and all six children are living in Priory Road. He is described as 'Schoolmaster' and his oldest son as 'monitor at school'. The children are listed as, Bessie Christine 16, George Edgar 15, Elsie Irene 13, Florence Grace 11, Ida May 10 and Lionel 1. A further son, Kenneth, was born in 1908. The Griffins are recorded in the town Directories as living in Priory Road from 1900 to 1910

When Chew's School shut, George Griffin became a supply-master, working for Bedfordshire Education Committee. During this time he gave many talks about the Far East. In 1911 George, Matilda and four children are living in Cumberland Road, Leagrave. The three eldest daughters have left home. Elsie Irene is in service in Cheltenham.

George Griffin died on Wednesday 12th March 1930 at 68 Edward Street, Dunstable, eleven days short of his 83rd birthday. Matilda Bessie is recorded as living there in the 1933 and 1935 directories. She died in the same house on 4th December 1935. They are both buried, side by side, in Dunstable cemetery.

Hugh Garrod

Some Local History Websites



There are five local history websites with which I am associated.

When I give talks to interested groups or lead conducted tours of The Priory, I suggest that my audience might like to consult some of these sites as a follow-up activity.

www.dunstableparish.org.uk This is the Dunstable C of E website and features information on the churches in the Team. You can click on St. Peter's and then on History to find all my research on the history of The Priory, from its foundation.

www.associationofdunstablecharities.co.uk This is the website of the Association of Dunstable Charities. If you click on History, you will find all my research into William Chew, Frances Ashton, Jane Cart, Blandina Marshe, Mary Lockington and other members of the extended Marshe family. This is a work in progress, as I am still finding new information on our Georgian benefactors.

www.dunstablehistory.co.uk This is the website of The Dunstable and District Local History Society. Here you will find past editions of our Newsletter, the Time Line, Publications, the Gallery, Events and membership details.

www.medievaldunstable.org.uk This is the website which accompanies the 'Medieval Dunstable' book which we published in 2013 to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the Dedication of Dunstable's Augustinian Priory. It contains details of the Town, its Priory, the Tournaments and a Time Line.

www.friendsofprioryhouse.co.uk This is the website of the Friends of Priory House and Gardens. It contains information about the history of the building and the gardens, the wall paintings, plans for the future of the site and up-coming outings and talks. It features the Gateway Project, setting out the history of the structure and the plans for its restoration and enhancement. There are also membership details.

Hugh Garrod

ED 'STEWPOT' STEWART



Ed 'Stewpot' Stewart, who sadly died on 9th January, 2016 was well-known for his work as a DJ on BBC Radio 1 (particularly Saturday morning Junior Choice) and as a presenter on BBC Television for Top of the Pops and Crackerjack.

DUNSTABLE CARNIVAL

He visited Dunstable on Monday, 31st May, 1976, to open the town's first carnival for 14 years. It is reported that 25,000 people attended, many of them first watching the procession of about 40 floats on its way through the town. Leading the procession were pipe bands and the journey took over an hour from the start at Brewers Hill Road to the finish at Kingsway. Along the route, over £180 was collected in buckets, by students from Dunstable College.

Ed Stewart opened the carnival with a shout of 'Crackerjack' which was keenly shouted back by the crowds in the manner of the television show he presented. Over 90 organisations from the local area provided stalls and entertainment. The site for the carnival stretched from Grove House Gardens to the field behind the Leisure Centre, roughly where 'Go Bowling' is now. There was a donkey derby and the 'Spread Eagle' parachute display team who, despite windy conditions, managed to land 2 parachutists in the arena.



Ed 'Stewpot' Stewart

Other entertainment included Highland Dancing and a German Shepherd dogs display team. The town had really entered into the spirit of the event with awards for the best dressed shop window, a 5-a-side football final, children's fancy dress and a prize for the best carnival float in the parade. A 4 page supplement in the Dunstable Gazette of 4th June depicted some of the floats such as the Cross Paperware 'Disney' display and a 'Whickers World'. There were photos of the crowds as well as the Carnival Queen, Sandra Fields, being congratulated by Ed 'Stewpot' Stewart.

A REPEAT VISIT

A year later, on Monday, 6th June, 1977, Ed was in town again for a slightly less successful jubilee celebration carnival, on what would have been a special public holiday to commemorate the Queen's 25th anniversary of her coronation.

Unfortunately, foul weather caused the Red Arrows to cancel a fly-past and the 'Spread Eagle' display team landed off-target.

Despite the weather 30,000 attended and 60 floats took part in the procession. The defining picture shows Ed Stewart on the stage looking anxiously up at a sagging canopy carrying a wet weekend's worth of rain that was threatening to saturate everyone beneath.

John Pratt

ROAD SCRAPINGS

In the Legless Lal article in the last newsletter, we referred to the book 'Road Scrapings' by Captain Haworth which also contained several other stories about coaches and coachmen in Dunstable and we thought you might find this one interesting.

SPICY JACK

One is about Jack Everett, who was reckoned in his day to have fingers for holding the reins as fine as anybody in the profession and took the coach from The Swan with Two Necks, in Ladd Lane, to Dunstable.

"Spicy Jack" was the beau ideal of a sporting whip. He was always dressed to the letter, though his personal appearance had been very much marred by two coach accidents, in each of which he fractured a leg. The first one having been hurriedly set a little on the bow, he wished to have the other arranged as much like it as possible; the result being that they grew very much in the form of a horse-collar. These "crook'd legs," as he called them, reduced his stature to about five feet three inches.

DRESSED IN THE TASTE OF THE PERIOD

He dressed in the taste of the period: A blue coat, buttons very widely apart over the region of the kidneys, looking as if they had



taken their places to fight a duel, rather than belonging to the same coat; a large kersey vest of a horsecloth pattern; a startling blue fogle and breast-pin; drab overalls, tightly fitted to the ankle and instep of a Wellington boot, strapped under the foot with a very narrow tan-coloured strap; the whole surmounted by a drab, napless hat, with rather a brim, producing a "slap-up" effect.

SPORTING YELLOW MAIL-PHAETON

When at the local race-meetings, "Spicy Jack" dashed on to the course in a sporting yellow mail-phaeton, his whip perpendicular, his left hand holding the reins just opposite the third button of his waistcoat from the top. It produced such an impression upon the yokels that no one but "Spicy Jack" could come on to a racecourse in such form.

GREASED THE ROPES

All this appeared like "cheek," but it was quite the reverse; for in spite of the familiarity which was universally extended to this "sporting whip," he never forgot his place with a gentleman, and a more respectful man in his avocation did not exist. And, said Capt Haworth, nobody knew the ropes at Harpenden, Barnet, and St. Albans, when the platers ran to amuse the public, and the public "greased the ropes", better than Jack.

John Buckledee

Did Edward IV pass through Dunstable in 1471?



In Alison Weir's book 'Elizabeth of York' it states that her father, Edward IV 'on 9th April, marching south from Dunstable... sent "very comfortable messages to his Queen" in Westminster Abbey.

Weir cites 'Historie of the Arrivall of King Edward IV in England and the Final Recouerye of His Kindomes' as the source. This event does not figure on the History Society's Timeline or on the Medieval Dunstable website.

This is part of the story of the 'Wars of The Roses'. Edward IV was the older brother of Richard III and the father of the Princes in the Tower. Elizabeth, his daughter, married Henry VII. Edward replaced Henry VI as king in 1461 and lost the crown when 'Warwick the Kingmaker' changed sides. This is a simplification of a very complicated series of events. Having fled abroad, Edward came back, rallied his supporters and marched south towards London. This is when the reference to Dunstable occurs.

On a visit to the British Library, I consulted 'Arrivall' and could find no reference to Dunstable. On page 15 it says that while travelling from Northampton to St. Albans 'he came upon the Twesday, the ix day of April, from whens he sent comfortable messages to the Quene to Wesrminstar.' I later emailed Alison Weir to query her source. She referred me to 'Edward IV' by Charles Ross who cites 'The Great Chronicle of London' for the use of 'Dunstable'. On my next visit to the British Library, I consulted Charles Ross' book and then the 'Chronicle'. Ross, on p 166 says, 'By way of Daventry and Dunstable, Edward had reached St. Albans on 10 April.' On p 215 of the 'Chronicle' it says Edward came down 'wattlynstrete' and on p 216 he 'came upon



A 19th century engraving of Edward IV

good ffryday nyght unto Seynt Albonys.' The 'Chronicle' had foot notes which mentioned 2nd Croyland, Fabyans's Chronicle 1811, Leland's Collectanae and Polydore Vergil's 1774 edition.

Regarding Edward IV's journey to London in order to re-claim his throne in 1471, neither Croyland, Fabian nor Leland mentions Dunstable or St Albans. Polydore Vergil mentions St. Albans but not Dunstable. I also consulted 'Jasper Tudor' by Terry Brevington. He mentions St. Albans but not Dunstable. Hall's Chronicle does not mention either Dunstable or St. Albans.

My conclusion, for what it's worth, is that Edward IV almost certainly passed through Dunstable in 1471 on his way to London, but none of the primary sources I have found so far actually confirms it.

SOURCES

None of the sources is neutral in its reporting. They are all biased, taking sides in the Wars of the Roses, being pro or anti Richard III etc.

Historie of the Arrivall; this covers the events surrounding Edward IV's return in 1471.

The Great Chronicle of London; 1189 to 1512.

Croyland; 704 to 1486

Fabian; histories of England and France ranging from the mythical Brutus, after whom Britain is allegedly named, to the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth I

John Leland's Itinerary; travels in Tudor times recording past events in places visited.

Polydore; covers the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III

Hall's Chronicle; Henry IV to Henry VIII

Hugh Garrod



Memories of old Dunstable

John Buckledee is collecting anecdotes and memories of old Dunstable. These days, most of them are arriving via the internet, but you can also contact John on 01582 703107.

LABURNHAM VILLA

There's been a satisfactory outcome to a long-running query from Sam Mellonie, who has been trying to tidy up gaps in the records about Roman artifacts found in Dunstable.

Central Beds Council has a document recording the discovery in 1919 at Laburnham Villa, Union Street, of a Roman Republican silver coin from 49 BC, perhaps showing "Vibius Pansa Jupiter". But where was Laburnham Villa? Isn't it annoying when an address doesn't give the street number as well as the house name!

The history society tried to help by, first, going through all the Union Street references in the street directories kept by us at Priory House. No luck there, so literally the next step was to walk the length of the street looking for clues. But no sign of a laburnham, whether carved or growing.

So we contacted the Manshead Archaeological Society at their headquarters in Winfield Street. The society has detailed records of this kind of thing, and quickly found their own reference to the discovery. Alas, that too merely said "Laburnham Villa". One of their members took the trouble of also walking up and down Union Street, but had the same negative result as us.

Then Jon Hitchcock, of the Manshead Society, working in the research room at Luton Library, noticed that many of the Luton

Street Directories of the time also included sections about Dunstable. Amazingly, these are more comprehensive than our local versions, and a directory of 1908 records Laburnham Villa as being at 83 Upper Union Street, occupied by A. Limbrey.

The story doesn't end there, however, because many streets in Dunstable have since been renumbered. But our numbers expert, Hugh Garrod, worked out that what was once 83 Upper Union Street subsequently became 144 Union Street. There's a new house on the site now.

It had taken a long time, but we could finally send the information to Sam who is most impressed and has thanked everyone involved for their perseverance.

LUTON LIBRARY

We tend to overlook the resources at Luton Library when researching Dunstable events. We usually head straight for the Dunstable Gazette microfilms held at Dunstable Library, but back-copies of the Luton News can sometimes be more helpful. For instance, during a period prior to 1930 the Dunstable Borough Gazette and the Luton News were deadly rivals. The Luton News actually had its own editorial branch office almost opposite the Gazette in the building which is now occupied by Alders, the opticians, and the reporters based there, led by Ernest Buckman, provided arguably a better coverage of the town. So a trip to Luton Library, if you are researching events just prior to 1930, can be very fruitful.

The circulation of the Gazette dwindled so much in the years prior to 1930 that the paper was due to close. The Mayor and a deputation of townspeople went to the owners of the Luton News, the Gibbs family, and begged them to buy the Gazette and keep it going as a purely Dunstable paper. That's what happened, and Mr Buckman was made the Gazette's editor.

BRITISH INFANTRY SWORD

A British Infantry sword bearing an inscription saying "Presented to J.H. King by the Dunstable V.T.C. Dec 16th 1915" has been obtained by Richard Fuller who wrote to the history society seeking more information.



The hilt of the sword

The reverse of the blade is etched with wings and lightning bolts within the words Royal and Engineers and it has the stamped numbering 51207 with the maker's name and address: "Henry Wilkinson, Pall Mall, London". Wilkinson Sword confirms that that sword 51207 was sold on December 21 1915 to J.H. King of the Royal Engineers.

JOHN HENRY KING

A trawl through the Dunstable Gazette microfilms in Dunstable library uncovered a story dated December 29 1915 about John Henry King, who had been made a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers.

It was headlined "From the VTC to the Army: Dunstablian receives a commission" and continued:

"We learn that Mr J.H. King of High Street South, Dunstable, has been granted a commission in the East Anglian Royal Engineers.

The news has been received with mixed feelings by the members of the Dunstable detachment of the Luton VTC of which Mr King has been in command since the detachment was first formed, as while they heartily congratulate him upon his appointment they much regret that this will mean the loss of his services to the VTC as it is largely due to him that the Dunstable detachment has made such excellent progress."

The report added that Mr King's outstanding courtesy and genial disposition had made him most popular with all ranks.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING CORPS

All this adds to our store of knowledge about the local VTC, which stands for Volunteer Training Corps – the World War One equivalent of the Home Guard. There was a bit of puzzlement recently over a military cap badge, showing a hand grasping ears of corn, found in the belongings of a soldier, Alfred Gage William Farlow Wilson, who had lived all his life in or near Dunstable. Relatives found his war-time photo and the badge after he died aged 101 and were intrigued to know where he had served.



The military cap badge, showing a hand grasping ears of corn

Inquiries about the badge locally and at the Imperial War Museum drew a blank, and a Dunstable Gazette story about the mystery was reproduced far and wide on various websites. Some French military experts then provided the answer – it was the badge of the Luton Volunteer Training Corps. Voila, they said, the mystery is solved! Red faces in Bedfordshire about our lack of local knowledge.

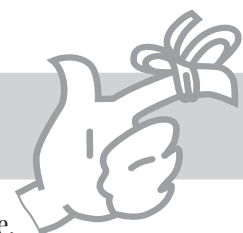
Significantly, Alfred Wilson had worked at Vauxhall in Luton. But now we know there was a Dunstable detachment of the Luton VTC.

continued overleaf

 <h2 style="font-family: cursive;">Sad Farewell</h2> 
<p>We are very sorry to announce the sad loss of</p>
<p>Kathleen Adams Don Maskell</p>

<h2 style="font-family: cursive;">Greeting New Members</h2>
<p>We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the following new members:</p>
<p>Mary Chapman Mr and Mrs D Foster Barbara Lacey Linda Jamieson Stuart and Christine Jones Harry Rice</p>

Memories of old Dunstable continued



BOMB SITE

Additional information has arrived about another World War One story. Historian Worthington Smith died in 1917 from influenza contracted when he visited a bomb site at Harrison Carter's engineering works in Bull Pond Lane, which had been attacked by a Zeppelin.

Dr Peter Hoare is researching the life of Worthington Smith, and is intrigued by a reference in the county records office to a fragment of talc being recovered from the bomb crater. No-one has yet come up with an explanation for this use of the word talc. But history society members had plenty of anecdotes about the bombing. Apparently a large number of Dunstable people went to see the crater and nearly all of them took away fragments of the bomb as souvenirs. When the men from the Munitions Department arrived the following day, wanting to examine the evidence to work out what kind of weapons were being produced by the Germans, there was almost nothing left!

I was told that it would have been an incendiary bomb. A curiosity about bombs dropped on the chalk hills around Dunstable during World War II is that they left star-shaped craters and created a great deal of chalk dust (talc?).

The Zeppelin which dropped the bomb was one of a fleet of German airships which made a combined attack on England. This particular airship, Zeppelin L44, also bombed Heath and Reach and was shot down in France on its way home.

MAGNIFICENT LIBRARY ROOM AT ASHTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

It's hard work using the antiquated microfilm viewer at Dunstable library, and it was particularly discouraging to spend many hours seeking information about the magnificent library room at Ashton Middle School.

Conservation experts have been examining the old Dunstable Grammar School building to decide what ought to be preserved and the library was one of the areas which gave particularly food for thought. Its furnishings were provided in 1924 as a memorial to former pupils of the school who died in World War One. Around the room there are handsome made-to-measure wooden shelves, with the names of the fallen and other emblems carved on fittings around a fireplace. An additional board with the names of those killed in World War Two was added later.

Everyone wanted very much to learn more about the library but F.M. Bancroft's published history of the Grammar School provides very little detail. Surely the Gazette of 1924 would do better? But the best it could do was a brief mention during a very long report on October 29 of the school's prizegiving at which the Earl of Clarendon was principal speaker. During the event Mr O. Anderson, chairman



The library room at Ashton Middle School

of the Old Boys' Memorial Committee, officially presented the keys of the new library to the school governors. Alas, among the usual platitudes, there is no useful information about the building of the library apart from the fact that the room was the school's former gymnasium.

QUEEN'S HEAD PUBLIC HOUSE

Memories about the old Queen's Head public house, which once stood on what is now the Wilko's car park, have arrived from Chris McNair, who now lives near Sydney in Australia. His bedroom was behind the top left window of our photo. His mum's name was Nellie and she was renowned in the pub for her bar sandwiches.

The Queen's Head had one resident guest named George. He was knocked down by a car outside the pub and suffered bad injuries to his face.

Chris started Havelock Motors, which had several branches in Luton, in 1959. It all came to end when the Labour Government in 1964 tried to force more new-car exports by restricting finance. Local sales then "fell off a cliff", to quote Chris. He emigrated in 1971.



The Queen's Head public house on the site which is now Wilko's car park

DOUG DARBY

It was good to hear from 95-year-old Mrs Jean Sealey, of Belper, Derbyshire, who asked if we remembered her late brother, Doug Darby. Of course we do!

Doug had a fund of anecdotes about old Dunstable. I particularly liked one which featured Jean when she was around five years old and was mentioned in the Children's Hour radio programme run by "Uncle Mac". At one point in the show he would call out a child's name and tell her to follow a line of string attached to the radio. Low and behold, "Jean Darby of Dunstable" was the lucky name one memorable evening, and she followed the string to a cupboard under the stairs where it was attached to a doll. Doug and Jean's mum and dad, of course, had been in touch with Uncle Mac. What magic!

ELINOR BRENT-DYER

Elinor Brent-Dyer wrote around 100 books for children, and was particularly famous for the Chalet School series for girls, which has been constantly in print from 1925 until the present. She died in 1969 aged 75. We now learn that she once worked as a teacher at Moreton House, an up-market private school for girls and boarders, which was in West Street, Dunstable, between 1860 and 1925. Does anyone know more about her time in Dunstable?

John Buckledee