

NEWSLETTER

Dunstable & District Local History Society
No. 53 February 2020



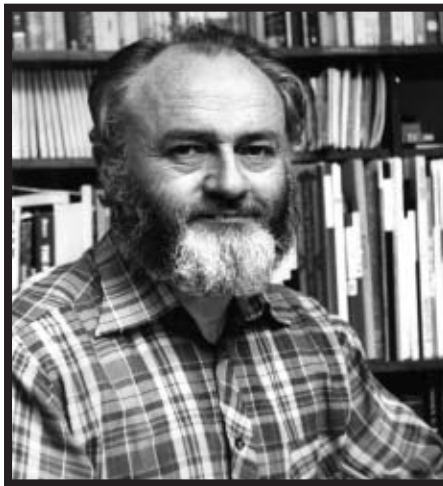
Chairman's Notes

The society was sad to hear of the death in December of Omer Roucoux, one of our founder members.

He was 90 and had been in failing health for some time.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

He edited this newsletter for many years and was a fount of information about local history. He amassed a large library of local books and maps at his home and relished using his knowledge of science and language to answer queries which would have defeated most of us.



Omer Roucoux

WATLING STREET

One example of his meticulous research was the book *The Roman Watling Street from London to High Cross*, published in 1984, in which he analysed Roman and Medieval documents to trace its route. Some of us in the history society watched with wry amusement when the tv programme *Time Team* went to a great deal of trouble to solve problems about the road which Omer had already answered.

SIGNALLING STATION

Omer was fascinated by the signalling station which stood on top of Dunstable Downs during Napoleonic times and consulted Admiralty charts to try to discover the code by which messages were transmitted. He proved that the famous painting of the station used meaningless 'artistic licence' when portraying the signals.

PHOTOGRAPHY

One of his main hobbies was photography and, in the days before digital cameras, he developed and printed his pictures in a darkroom installed in the attic of his home at Ullswater Road. His photos have been used in numerous local books.

Famously, he utilised a 'cherry picker' platform to reach the high roof inside the Priory Church, where his photographs of the wooden statues there revealed the very distinctive features of their carved faces.

One of these statues, almost impossible to see from the ground, contains an early depiction of Dunstable's coat of arms, whose symbol of a staple and a ring was used by Omer when he designed the logo of Dunstable and District Local History Society.

BELGIAN BORN

Omer was born in Belgium. After studying theology in Belgium he went to what was then the Belgian Congo in 1956, where he gained a biology degree and teaching qualifications. He taught in Rwanda from 1959 until 1972, when he came to England to marry his wife Jean, whom he had met while on holiday here.

He loved classical music and had an enormous collection of recordings on reel-to-reel tape. He played the piano and in the 1970s sang tenor in a straw-hatted barbershop group at Manshead school where he was a science teacher between 1973 and 1993.

LOCAL HISTORY BOOKS

Our President, Paul Bowes, has kindly donated a collection of local history books to the society which he published under his Bookcastle banner. We will be selling them over the next few months for our funds.

BEDFORDSHIRE DAY ETC.

Other noteworthy recent activities have been the society's participation in the Bedfordshire Day event in the Priory Church and helping once again with the publication of the annual DLDD calendar featuring old photos of the town. David Turner and myself, at the request of the town council, have produced a large wall panel giving a brief history of Middle Row as part of the application to Historic England for a grant to help with town centre renovation. Society members, as always, have been giving a number of talks, one of which featured a World War Two display by David Underwood at Lancot Academy where he activated a genuine air-raid warning siren. In an enclosed classroom it was deafening!

John Buckledee

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 10, before we hear a talk, in our usual venue, about Bigamy, Bankruptcy, War and Divorce. To save postage costs, we are not mailing out minutes and agendas this year, and this newsletter paragraph is your notification in case you have any issues to raise. Nominations for officers and committee members should be sent to the editor: david@turners.co.uk. We particularly need additional members on our committee and nominations are urgently required to fill the position of secretary.

The attempt to rescue Edward II



Noted historian Kathryn Warner is an expert on the life of King Edward II.

She is continuing to transcribe the mass of medieval documents relating to his reign, and in the process has discovered much new information relating to Dunstable. Her researches are published regularly on her website (www.edwardthesecond.blogspot.com) and she has written a number of articles and books about him, in particular *Edward II the Unconventional King* and *Long Live the King, the Mysterious Fate of Edward II*. She was enormously helpful to our chairman John Buckledee when he began researching the history of tournaments in Dunstable, particularly the great event held here in 1309.

In the article here, she writes about the Dunstable involvement in the attempt to rescue Edward after he had been deposed from power by forces led by his wife, Queen Isabella, and Roger Mortimer. Edward was held in prison at Berkeley Castle but an attempt to free him was made by a 'great company' led by a Dominican friar named Stephen Dunheved and his brother Thomas. Edward was actually released from the castle, but recaptured soon afterwards.

The Dominicans had a friary in Dunstable on land to the north of Friars Walk, and their relationship with the canons at Dunstable's Augustinian priory, on the other side of the Watling Street, was not good...

JOHN NORTON AND JOHN REDMERE: THE ATTEMPT TO RESCUE THE KING BY KATHRYN WARNER

John Norton and John Redmere were Dominican friars who were involved in the Dunheveds' plot to free the former Edward II from Berkeley Castle in the summer of 1327.

Edward's guardian Thomas, Lord Berkeley, wrote a letter on 27 July 1327 naming the men who had attacked his castle and seized Edward from his custody, and also wrote that 'two great leaders of this company have been arrested [literally 'taken'] by the community of Dunstable and are held there in prison, that is: Brother John Redmere, keeper of our lord the king's stud-farm, and John Norton.'^[1]

So I did a bit of digging into these two men, and discovered that John Redmere was indeed keeper of the king's stud-farm, a position he had held since at least 1317/18, the eleventh year of Edward II's reign.^[2]

John Norton was, I assume, the man of this name who was a clerk of Edward II's, and who for many years was 'surveyor of the works of the king's palace at Westminster and of the Tower of London.' He was responsible for purchasing provisions for Edward's coronation in February 1308, including lime and sea coal, and proved remarkably tardy in paying for the items: the unfortunate merchants were still pleading for their money as late as 1320. He was also responsible for buying planks and timber for Edward III's coronation in February 1327.

In September 1312, Edward II appointed Norton as his attorney before the justices of King's Bench, and in December 1316, ordered him to provide ships at Bristol and Haverford for Roger

Mortimer's journey to Ireland.^[3] Norton's unwillingness to pay his debts got him into trouble with Edward: he was in prison in the Tower of London in December 1325, when Edward asked the treasurer and barons of the Exchequer for their advice in finding 'means whereby the king may best and most quickly recover the debt' Norton and his associate Nicholas of Tickhill owed him.^[4] Given his willingness to fight for the former king's release in 1327, I presume that Norton forgave Edward for imprisoning him. (Assuming that all these entries relate to the same man; 'John Norton', after all, is not an uncommon name.)

The Dominicans were staunch supporters of Edward II, and many of them, according to the Brut, willingly helped Brother Thomas Dunheved's plot and 'cast and ordained, both night and day' how they might release Edward from captivity. So it is hardly surprising to find that Norton and Redmere were among them; a Dominican from the Warwick convent, John of Stoke, was an important enough member of the conspiracy for his arrest to be ordered at the same time as Stephen Dunheved's in May 1327, and he was to be taken before the king.^[5]

On 3 March 1327, John Norton was accused with several other men of 'carrying away the goods' of William Trussell, who had pronounced the death sentence on Hugh Despenser the Younger the previous November, although this crime may date to years before, after Trussell had fled the country following the Contrariants' defeat at the battle of Boroughbridge.^[6]

On 28 May 1327, Norton was sent to Cheshire and the marches of Wales 'on business concerning Queen Isabella.'^[7]

ATTACK ON BERKELEY CASTLE

What's interesting is that the Dunheved brothers and some of their adherents were in Chester in June 1327 – did Norton join them then, or was he already a sympathiser to their cause, unbeknownst to Isabella? The attack on Berkeley Castle to free Edward had almost certainly taken place by 28 June – or, at the very least, was just about to take place – when Norton was given letters of protection, presumably to travel to Cheshire on Isabella's behalf.^[8]

He was an important member of the gang, at least according to Lord Berkeley, though evidently his participation was still unknown on 28 June when he received his letters of protection,



North East view of Berkeley Castle where Edward II was imprisoned and the attempt to free him was made

and was discovered some time later by Lord Berkeley and ‘the community of Dunstable’.

HELD IN PRISON AT DUNSTABLE

An entry of 11 August 1327 on the Close Roll confirms Berkeley’s statement that Norton and Redmere were being held in prison at Dunstable – the prior of Dunstable’s prison, in fact – when the bailiffs were ordered to send them to Wallingford Castle.^[9]

Another order was issued on 21 October, to send them and the men held with them, Robert of Ely and Nigel Mereman of Cornbury, to the notorious Newgate prison in London.^[10]

Robert of Ely was Norton’s servant, but I haven’t been able to trace Nigel Mereman. Presumably they heard the news in late September 1327, while in captivity at Dunstable, that Edward II had died at Berkeley – allegedly.

TAKE AND KEEP IN PRISON

I very much doubt if it is a coincidence that the writ to send the men to Newgate was issued three days after an order to the sheriff of Bedfordshire, on 18 October, to ‘take and keep in prison’ four named men and unnamed, uncounted others, ‘who are riding about, as the king learns, armed in diverse parts of that county [Bedfordshire] with other malefactors, lying in wait by day and night for the prior of Donestaple and his men and other subjects of the king, committing many evils there.’^[11]

This sounds to me as though these men were trying to free Norton, Redmere and their associates from prison, hence their removal to Newgate. The four named ‘malefactors’ were Philip de Wibbesnade (Whipsnade), John Salbot, Thomas atte Halle and Robert Duraunt. That these men were hostile to the regime of Isabella and Roger Mortimer and probably, therefore, sympathetic to Edward II is demonstrated by the fact that Wibbesnade, Duraunt, atte Halle and his brother William joined the earl of Lancaster’s rebellion against Isabella and Mortimer in late 1328.

They were among the men, many of them former allies of the queen and her favourite who had been imprisoned or exiled by Edward II or played an important role in his and the Despensers’ downfall, such as William Trussell, Hugh Audley, Thomas Wake, Henry Leyburne, Thomas Roscelyn and Henry Beaumont, who rode to Bedford ‘against the king with armed power.’^[12]



The English people welcomed the rebel army that Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer led from France

Of course they weren’t riding ‘against the king’ at all, but against the pair ruling England in his name.

Thomas Berkeley’s letter of 27 July 1327 also declared that ‘I have heard from certain people of my household, who have seen and heard of it, that a great number of people have made assemblies in Buckinghamshire and other adjoining counties, for the same cause’; that is, attempting to free Edward. The existence of this plot is known only from Berkeley’s letter, and nothing came of it, but Dunstable is in Bedfordshire, which borders Buckinghamshire.

PETITIONED EDWARD III

Probably in September or October 1327, John Norton and John Redmere petitioned Edward III, who was not yet fifteen, saying that ‘when they were at Dunstable, to hear mass in the house of their [Dominican] order there, they were arrested by the Bailiffs and community and thrown into prison,’ accused of trying to rescue the lord king’s father from Berkeley Castle.* Because this was such a sensitive matter, the bailiffs declared that ‘John and John can only be delivered before the king.’ Redmere and Norton asked ‘that they might be able to come before our lord the king to stand to right according to the law of the land, as they have been in prison first at Dunstable and now at Aylesbury, and are at point of death as a result.’ When they were in prison at Aylesbury, I don’t know.^[13]

John Redmere is one of the many men trying to free Edward II who vanishes from the pages of history after the summer/autumn of 1327. I have no idea what became of him. John Norton’s petition, on the other hand, was successful, and he was still alive in the 1330s; in October 1333, he – again, assuming it’s the same John Norton – was said to be ‘constantly attendant on the king’s [Edward III’s] business.’^[14] He was thus one of only a handful of the men who had tried to free the former king who certainly lived after 1327.

Kathryn Warner

Sources

¹ F. J. Tanqueray, ‘The Conspiracy of Thomas Dunheved, 1327’, *English Historical Review*, 31 (1916), pp. 119-124.

² *The National Archives* E 101/100/12 and E 101/99/27; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1321-1324*, p. 334, *Cal Pat Rolls 1324-1327*, p. 297.

³ TNA SC 8/6/286, SC 8/6/287, SC 8/114/5675, SC 8/3/150, SC 8/4/153; *Calendar of Chancery Warrants 1244-1326*, pp. 274, 306; *Cal Pat Rolls 1307-1313*, p. 490; *Cal Pat Rolls 1313-1317*, pp. 574-575. There are numerous other mentions of Norton in contemporary records.

⁴ *Calendar of Close Rolls 1323-1327*, p. 437.

⁵ *Cal Pat Rolls 1327-1330*, p. 99.

⁶ *Cal Pat Rolls 1327-1330*, p. 75.

⁷ *Cal Pat Rolls 1327-1330*, p. 107.

⁸ *Cal Pat Rolls 1327-1330*, p. 133.

⁹ *Cal Close Rolls 1327-1330*, pp. 156, 179.

¹⁰ *Cal Close Rolls 1327-1330*, p. 179.

¹¹ *Cal Close Rolls 1323-1327*, pp. 232-233.

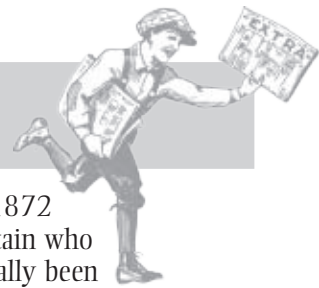
¹² *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous 1308-1348*, pp. 274-275.

¹³ TNA SC 8/69/3444.

¹⁴ *Cal Pat Rolls 1330-1334*, p. 470.

* This is one of the very few direct references to the Dunheveds’ plot to free Edward of Caernarfon, the others being: Lord Berkeley’s letter; a writ to the sheriff of Oxfordshire in August 1327 concerning William Aylmer, another conspirator; brief accounts in various chronicles, the Brut (and several continuations of it), *Annales Paulini* and *Lanercost*.

The Tibbett Family



The Society was recently involved in producing five interpretation panels for the Dunstable Cemetery.

One of the panels was devoted to the Tibbett family who were instrumental in establishing the town's newspapers and we thought it would make an interesting article for the newsletter.

JAMES TIBBETT SENIOR 1809/10 - 1876

James Tibbett Senior was the head of a family of local newspaper entrepreneurs.

In 1832 he married Sarah Cook and together they had 8 children,

3 boys and 5 girls.

James Tibbett started trading in Dunstable Market under an umbrella selling newspapers. After this, he began to attend all the local markets selling pencils, quill pens, writing paper and sealing-wax. His method of transport was a box on wheels drawn by a large dog.

From this small beginning he amassed enough money to rent a shop to sell stationery, toys and books at 11 (now 21) High Street South in around 1840.

Having bought a small press he began printing at the premises and this side of the business later became known as the Albion Press. James Tibbett was a Methodist lay preacher who strongly supported the temperance movement.

He established Dunstable's first local newspaper on 1st June 1855, the 'Dunstable Chronicle and Monthly Local Reporter'.

He followed this with the 'Dunstable Chronicle & Advertiser' which was published on 5th June 1856. He retired around 1869 to a large house in Icknield Street called Icknield Villa where he died in 1876.

JAMES TIBBETT JUNIOR 1841 - 1921

James Tibbett Junior took over the Albion Press around the year 1869 on his father's retirement. James married Elizabeth Johnson in 1866 and together they had 4 children, Alice, Alfred,



The Dunstable Chronicle and Advertiser which was published in June 1856

William and Charles. Elizabeth died in 1872 and in 1881 he married Henrietta Brittain who was 17 years his junior. She had originally been his housekeeper, and they went on to have 3 children, Gordon, Stanley and Howard.

Wanting to run a newspaper of his own he launched 'The Dunstable Advertiser and Weekly Reporter' on 2nd August 1884, in direct competition with the 'Dunstable Borough Gazette'. It was printed by the Albion Press and it continued publication until September 1905 when it was taken over and incorporated into the Luton Reporter.

The Albion Press was run by James until his death in 1921 after which his son Alfred and grandson Cyril expanded it, before being eventually taken over by Index Printers.

James was a highly respected member of the Dunstable Wesleyan Church and he devoted a great deal of his time and energy in connection with the church. He also actively supported the poor and distressed of the town.

DANIEL TIBBETT 1838 - 1871

Daniel, another son of James Tibbetts Senior, married Kezia Goode in 1862 and together they had two daughters, Ada and Nelsia. He set up his own printing, bookbinding and stationery business in 1864 at 71 High Street North (near the Quadrant).

In 1865, when he was only 26 years of age, he launched the 'Dunstable Borough Gazette', which became the 'Dunstable Gazette' in 1969. Sadly, Daniel died prematurely in 1871 at the age of 35 and his wife, Kezia, also died a few months later aged just 29, leaving their daughters orphaned.

James Tibbett Senior came out of retirement and ran the Gazette until it was sold in 1875.

David Turner



A front cover of The Dunstable Borough Gazette, dated Saturday 17th July 1869 – the paper was launched by Daniel Tibbett in 1865 and it became the Dunstable Gazette in 1969



A family gathering of the Tibbett family in the garden at Icknield Villa in 1876, James Tibbett Senior is standing on the right, just a few months before he died

Greeting New Members

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

Michael Cain

Phyllis Luckman



Sad Farewell



We are very sorry to announce the sad loss of

Barry Church

Omer Roucoux

Mary Roe

Stott's furniture and removal business



The Stott's furniture and removal business was a very familiar name in Dunstable for many years. Here Lorraine Stott writes about the firm's founder and how his shops expanded since he opened in Dunstable in 1927.

Albert Edward Fletcher Stott, known to everyone as Bert, was born in 1904 on the Isle of Wight where his parents were staying at the time. In due course the little family moved to Rochdale, Lancashire, where he spent most of his childhood. With the untimely death of his mother, his father decided to move to Canada. So the young Albert, at the age of 13, was sent to London to begin an apprenticeship at Cooks of St Pauls, a wholesale repository where he learned his trade.



Bert Stott

In 1927 he came to Dunstable and opened a shop on the East side of High Street South selling pianos and coffins. By this time his father had returned to Dunstable and had joined him in the business with his new wife, but as far as the family history tells, this arrangement was short-lived.



The first Stott shop at 11 High Street South, Dunstable, which opened in 1927. The building, which stood next to the present Co-op Funeral Furnishers at number 9, was demolished in the mid-1930s when the Woolworth store next door, a development of the original Woolworth Penny Bazaar, was enlarged. Woolworth's erected a new store on the site in the 1950s and that building has recently been demolished. The addresses in this part of Dunstable were renumbered in October 1920, which sometimes confuses modern researchers

In 1934 he married Barbara Tuffnell and had moved and bought number 22 High Street South opposite, where he began the furniture business AEF Stott. They lived in the flat above the shop. In 1936 he expanded the business to include removals. He had a repository built in Bull Pond Lane to store furniture and household effects and garage the removal vans.

By 1938 the family had moved from the flat to a newly built house at 18 Totternhoe Road, Dunstable, where my late husband was born and named Beverley Fletcher Stott, known to everyone as Bev.

During the war years the removal business was engaged in moving people's furniture out of London to all parts of the country. As customers living in the surrounding villages had no means of transport, he travelled around selling household items, soaps, disinfectant and brushes etc.



The Stott shop at 22 High Street South (Middle Row), next to the alleyway. The business eventually expanded into the Sketchley premises next door. Many years previously 22 High Street South had been the Britannia pub

In 1944 a daughter, Louise, was born and in 1947 they moved to 16 Friars Walk which continued to be the family home until my mother-in-law died in 1991.

Bev joined AEF Stott in 1957 and worked alongside his father. In 1960 they bought the premises at 18 Albion Street which became the Bedding and Nursery Centre which Bev developed into a successful arm of the business.

Bev and I married in 1962 and had two daughters and a son.

In 1965 they were able to purchase Sketchley Dry Cleaners at number 20 High Street South and converted the ground floor to make the adjoining show room. The first and second floors became offices and a larger showroom. It was at this time that AEF Stott became a limited company named Stott's of Dunstable Ltd.

The company continued to be a complete house furnisher for many years serving the community and surrounding villages.



The Stott business had large showrooms in Middle Row by the mid 1960s

In the freezing winter of 1977, my father-in-law was unwell but insisted on going into business. He took the post as usual across the road to the post box opposite and walked back to his office. He died in his chair in the place that he had worked most of his life.

Needless to say he left a huge void in all our lives and in due course the business changed, becoming a smaller more-manageable company.

Sadly in 1999 Bev died suddenly of a heart attack leaving myself, our three grown-up children and five grandchildren, the younger two having never met their grandfather.

I still run the business now named BLS Properties. The original shop AEF Stott 22 High St South is now Celebrations and Number 20 is The Coffee Pod, both incorporated within Ashton Square Business Centre.

Lorraine Stott

The Three Dukes of Dunstable



While hunting through the British Library website for Dunstable items, I came across a play, a comedy, called:

A FOOL'S PREFERMENT OR THE THREE DUKES OF DUNSTABLE

It was written by Thomas D'Ufrey (1653-1723) with eight new songs by Henry Purcell (1659-1695) and first performed in 1688. It is loosely based on the play 'A Noble Gentleman' by John Fletcher (1579-1625) and set in the time of Henry IV. It is dedicated to the Honourable Charles Lord Morpeth, a member of the Howard family. Much of the action takes place at Court. Unlike Shakespeare's times, female roles are played by female actors. There is a Prologue and an Epilogue.

ACT I

The main plot concerns John Cocklebrain, 'a half-witted Country-Gentleman' from Staffordshire. His assertive wife, Aurelia, is hooked on playing Basset, an addictive card game which favours the bank. She plays this with three characters called Clermont, Longeville and Bewford and needs her husband's money to continue gambling. She gulls him into parting with cash as she says she is buying him preferment to great honours at Court. John alternates between desiring preferment and wanting to return to his estates. His servant, Toby wants to go home and his uncle, Justice Grub, disparages his nephew's aspirations. The sub-plot involves Lyonel and Celia who are in love but the King has decided that Celia will marry someone else, unspecified. This drives Lyonel further and further into madness.

ACT II

Aurelia eventually spends all her husband's cash and tells him he must sell 300 acres of his land so that she can continue to seek his preferment. John and Toby prepare to leave for Grub's house when she hatches a plan to make him stay and sell up. She writes a note to her fellow players and sends it to them by her maid, Maria. Clermont approaches John and tells him not to leave as the King will be angry. Asked for an explanation, Clermont says that all the others at court who have not received preferment will rally to Cocklebrain and the King will see this as treason. Longeville then enters and tells John that the King wishes to confer a knighthood on him. Clermont cautions him not to accept and that he will go to the King and demand something higher. Cocklebrain assumes airs and agrees. Longeville exits and Bewford appears saying the King now wishes him to be a Lord. Clermont suggests he holds out for even more and Cocklebrain says he knows some Lords who are very common indeed and refuses the honour. Longeville reappears obsequiously and says the King now offers him a peerage, at which Clermont persuades him to be content. Bewford produces a robe and puts it on him at which Cocklebrain says 'I would be Duke of Dunstable, because I like the sound.' He plays the toff and the three pretend to be his servants, laughing behind their hands. Toby re-enters ready for the off but John is now in his role of 'Duke' When Aurelia enters he is reconciled to her because he now has his preferment.

ACT III

Grub tells his wife, Phillida, that John and Toby are expected soon as he has talked him out of this preferment nonsense. Phillida is a skittish young bride who would quite like to go to London and be in fashion. Toby enters and berates Grub for speaking ill of his master, who is now a Duke and he himself is styled Mr. Secretary and may also become a Duke one day. Grub is eventually convinced and he and his wife treat Toby with due deference. Grub now has aspirations

to be a Duke too. Chez Cocklebrain, Aurelia and her conspirators decide that they must isolate the 'Duke' so that no one tells him the truth. They arrange for people in the street to shout his praises. Aurelia discovers that Grub would also like to be a Duke.

ACT IV

Grub, Phillida and their illiterate servant, Roger, have come to London and are in St. James Park. Roger is completely over-awed by London and Phillida is a simple country girl who knows nothing. Grub is cross with both of them as he wants to make a good impression when they meet John. Toby then encounters Lyonel who first insists that he wear women's clothes and then that he strips off before fleeing. Grub, Phillida and Roger encounter Longeville and Bewford who take them to meet John and Aurelia. This produces much pantomime as Grub humbles himself and John is gracious to his uncle. Longeville and Bewford notice how pretty Phillida is and draw lots for the right to flirt with her, the latter wins. Grub notices the flirting and complains. Longeville tells him that Bewford has influence with the King and that if he wants preferment he should not interfere.

ACT V

Cocklebrain is wondering why he has no news from his estates when Toby enters, dressed only in a dirty blanket. His master does not recognise him at first. Cocklebrain insists they are now in Dunstable House. Toby says he spent the night in a Dunstable privy-house and explains about Lyonel. Toby leaves to clean up and Maria enters. Cocklebrain decides he must go and show his new status to his tenants and tells Maria to get her mistress ready to travel. Aurelia enters to object most strongly as she secretly wants to play at other card games with the ladies she has met in London. She decides that her husband must be stripped of his honours. Enter Grub, complaining that he still has no preferment, despite his wife's activities. Toby says his master is off to the country. Clermont and Longeville enter to enact Aurelia's plan. They pretend to be angry with Cocklebrain at wanting to leave London and with mock ceremony reduce him from Duke to Lord, from Lord to knight and then from knight to his original status. Aurelia pretends to weep, while Grub and Cocklebrain are dumb-founded. Clermont then elevates Grub to be Duke of Dunstable and Roger assumes the status of Mr. Secretary. Phillida is delighted to be a duchess. Longeville then asks to be able to pay court to her. Grub is instantly condescending to his nephew and his wife. Toby enters and is amazed at what has happened in his absence. Bewford then enters and says that it is really Toby who has been made Duke. Grub is angry but his master is subservient. At this point, the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod enters with Aurelia and says that none of them is Duke of Dunstable and orders the arrest of Clermont Longeville and Bewford. After they have left, the erstwhile Dukes dance a country dance and decide to return home. Lyonel and Celia enter. Lyonel is even more deranged than usual and is caught and taken away. John, Aurelia and Toby are left on the stage. Toby says they should distract themselves from their worries by enacting a farce called The Three Dukes of Dunstable. Cocklebrain says he has been in a farce these last days and is content to return home and eat turnips for seven years. The others agree and the play ends by all three saying

*And may no Fool for better Fortune look
That just from Digging, thinks to be a Duke.*

Hugh Garrod

Anne Buck

Anne Buck, a well-known figure in Dunstable, was a world-renowned authority on textiles and the history of costume design.

She was the sister of Arthur Buck, who was the Dunstable District Commissioner for Scouts and President of Dunstable Cricket Club. His local connections led to her distinguished career.

Arthur and his wife Elsie lived at The Chestnuts, off Friars Walk, where their large garden was the venue for numerous town events.



Arthur and his sister Anne Buck

Elsie, and Elsie's mother, both worked as secretaries at the Bagshawe engineering works in Church Street, Dunstable. The firm's owner, Thomas Bagshawe, was intensely interested in local history, and was looking for an assistant curator for Luton Museum. Elsie's mother thought that Anne would be a good candidate and arranged for Mr Bagshawe to interview her at their Friars Walk bungalow.

Anne, who had been working for The Times Book Club, was offered the Wardown job in June 1938. It was a very progressive decision – there were very few women working in museums at the time – but Anne had found her true calling and when the curator at Luton, Charles Freeman, was called away to war in 1940 Anne was left to run the museum on her own.

At Luton she learned the basis of good museum practice and, stimulated by the lace-making collection there, began her life-long study of textiles. When Manchester City Arts Galleries in 1947 started a costume museum, Anne was appointed to be its Keeper and she made it a centre of excellence, with a series of rigorously researched exhibitions which gained a world-wide reputation.

Anne became a towering presence in her field, author of numerous

books and articles and with a formidable intellect leavened by much wit and mischievousness. Described as a “fiery and beautiful young woman who changed the course of costume history”, she was an influential figure at numerous committees and conferences, wearing her “trademark” high-necked blouse, pinafore dress and brooch. She was awarded the OBE in 1971. On her retirement she came to live at Maulden in Bedfordshire where she made an impact in many ways. Among the stories told at her funeral in 2005 was about the day a local councillor ordered the cutting down of a wild apple tree which grew awkwardly near the door of a telephone box. Anne went to his house, told him he had murdered a native of Bedfordshire and hit him with her handbag. He called the police who refused to charge Anne and told the councillor that he should not interfere with her – she was a very passionate lady.

She was a frequent visitor to her brother and sister-in-law in Dunstable where she took great joy in seeing their two children and five grandchildren grow up. She was regularly amongst the audience at the Dunstable Repertory Company's productions in the Little Theatre. She died just days before her 95th birthday.



Anne Buck modelling a Victorian dress



Anne Buck with Princess Margaret

John Buckledee

Memories of old Dunstable

It's thrilling to receive messages from all over the world to the history society's website.

WILLIAM GRESHAM

A recent example was from Francois-Pierre Goy, a librarian in the Music Department of the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, who has seen Hugh Garrod's article about a visit by the Gresham family of New Zealand to their ancestral home in Dunstable.

This contained a reference to William Gresham, a noted musician who was organist at the Priory Church.

M. Goy is cataloguing an English manuscript dated 1810-1820, which contains a 'Slow march and Quickstep' for piano by 'Gresham', whom he assumes to be William Gresham. He has to create an authority record for him and has found c1750-c1815 as William's biographical dates in reference works. But William's descendants told Hugh that they have a family bible recording that he died in 1823. Family bibles are usually scrupulously accurate so it seems

that all the reference works are wrong. We have put M. Goy in touch with the family.

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

Another puzzle, so far unresolved, is the local connections of George Cruikshank, the famous artist who was the original illustrator of *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens, and who produced numerous satirical cartoons mocking the politicians and royalty of his day.

George was the son of Isaac Cruikshank, also a noted artist, and married a Dunstable girl, Mary Ann Walker, at the Priory Church in Dunstable on October 15 1827. How they met has not yet been discovered and Mary Ann receives hardly a mention in the Cruikshank biographies.

George paid a number of nostalgic visits to Dunstable in his old age when local newspaper reports mentioned his marriage and said that one of his engravings was of 'Dunstable Straw Sellers'.

continued overleaf

Memories of old Dunstable continued



The engraving that was mistakenly described as 'Dunstable Straw Sellers' by George Cruikshank and was in fact by his father, Isaac Cruikshank, titled 'Itinerant Dealers in Dunstable Ware'

It seems quite clear that the reporter was confusing this with an engraving titled 'Itinerant Dealers in Dunstable Ware' which is dated 1796 and is held by the Beds and Luton Archives Service.

George was not born until 1792 and the drawing is correctly attributed to Isaac. But there is no record of Isaac having any connection to Dunstable.

Some Dunstable newspaper reports of George's visits to Dunstable say that his son was also married at Dunstable. Maybe this was a misunderstanding of something George said. Both George's wives died childless but, scandalously, it was revealed

after his death that he had had a number of children by a mistress living just a few streets away from his home.

One Cruikshank biographer described Mary Ann Walker of Dunstable as a sweet-tempered girl, aged about 16 or 17 on her wedding day, 'a cousin who may have been the granddaughter of her mother's uncle'. She was 42 when she died in 1849, so the dates do not tally. Her age is given on the marriage document as 21, so that does not tally either.

A huge amount of information has been published about George Cruikshank's complicated life so perhaps some local details about his wife will still emerge.

STEPHANIE VOSS

A reference in a previous newsletter to a live broadcast of Friday Night Is Music Night from Dunstable's Queensway Hall mentioned that the star singer that evening was Stephanie Voss.

Stephanie made numerous appearances on tv in the 1950s but is largely forgotten today, mainly because she was popular in an era before videos of tv shows became commonplace.

But it's a small world, because history society member Pauline Wolsey went to school with Stephanie. They were in the same year, at Minchenden Grammar School, Southgate.

Pauline writes: 'Her father was Louis Voss who conducted the band at the Kursaal, Southend, and also directed the Sydney Thompson 'Old Tyme' dance orchestra.

Louis Voss did 149 editions of 'Music While You Work'. His real name was Noss but once when he signed a contract his writing was so bad that it looked like Voss and that is what he became.



Stephanie Voss

KENNETH BATES

History society member Veronica Squires has been working to try to help John Mitchell of Melbourne, Australia, who wrote to our website seeking details about his grandfather, Kenneth Bernard Bates, who was born in Totternhoe on February 2, 1894. John is trying to find out where his ancestor is buried.

Veronica was given access to the Totternhoe Parish Church records and spent many hours hunting for a record of Kenneth Bates without success. We have contacted John who is now having to widen his search.

THE ROYAL OAK

Our website picture of the Royal Oak pub, which stood in Church Street opposite the entrance to Priory Road, sparked a debate recently. It looks nothing like the pub which some Dunstablians still remember.

We've spent some time checking, and thanks to some brilliant detective work by David Ainsbury at Luton Museum we can confirm that the picture shows an earlier version of the Royal Oak, demolished in 1907.

The clue was the poster on the building, advertising a concert at the Grand Theatre, Luton. David has deciphered the names of some of the performers (Frank Haskell, Roy Horniman and Rose Waldenstrum) and connected them with a review of a concert in the Luton Reporter newspaper in April 1903. In that year Dunstable magistrates refused to renew the licence for the pub, described as being in an unstable and dirty condition (which is perhaps why it was then covered in posters).



The Royal Oak in Church Street

QUEENSBURY SCHOOL

Locals may have forgotten the proposal in the mid-1980s to close Queensbury School because of falling pupil numbers in the region. A massive campaign to save the school dominated newspapers here for many months.

A scrapbook of press cuttings about the controversy was assembled by David McVicar, a parent-governor at Queensbury, who became one of the leaders of the campaign. He has just presented the book to the history society.

His efforts were, of course, successful and one important by-product was that his experience of dealing with local government led to him becoming a councillor himself. Since the 1980s he has been involved in many local issues, particularly in the efforts to ensure the building of the Grove Theatre.

John Buckledee