

Newsletter

DUNSTABLE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

N°7

March 1997



A Heritage Centre for Dunstable

We thought it would be useful to bring to the attention of our members an extract from "The Future of our Town Centre - A Draft Strategy for Dunstable", November 1996

The document introduces the importance of historical events which happened here: the town foundation, the royal connections of the Priory, the annulment of the marriage of Henry VIII, etc. and continues...

This heritage is an important asset to the town which, if made more accessible and alive, will encourage the development of tourism in the town. It is important that, in order for visitors to the town and residents to have an understanding of the town's rich heritage and appreciate its unique setting, suitable interpretative material must be provided at key locations in keeping with historic settings.

In recent years a series of information plaques and notices have been placed on important buildings or the site of lost ones as well as a series of imaginative interpretation boards in the grounds of the former Priory. This will continue and it is proposed to produce a similar display relating to the former Dominican Friary in High Street South.

It is also proposed to review the number and style of existing interpretative material to ensure that it is compatible with the design strategy for the town but if there is to be full interpretation of the town's heritage sufficient to attract numbers of visitors, the provision of a new Heritage Centre is vital.

Prior to the second world war Dunstable did maintain its own small museum but since that time Luton Museum Service has assumed the role of collecting authority for the South Bedfordshire area. It is doubtful whether Dunstable could sustain its own full museum service and, for the time being, it is not proposed to seek to change the important role played by Luton Museum Service in this area. There is, however, a clear and demonstrable need for the provision of a Heritage Centre and it is proposed this should be sited in the vicinity of the Priory. *

It is proposed that such a centre should comply with the following broad principles:

1. It must contribute towards the organisation of the town

centre and be consistent with the proposed town centre strategy.

2. It should draw upon the rich local heritage especially the national importance of the Priory and make connections between past, present and future Dunstable.

3. It must include suitable exhibition space with appropriate climatic conditions in order to attract touring exhibitions.

4. It must present exciting interactive opportunities to persuade visitors to make return visits.

5. To come to fruition it must be capable of attracting major external funding and accordingly should comply with the objectives of the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

6. It must be capable of generating substantial income towards its running costs.

Before embarking upon such a major project it will first be necessary to clearly define its objectives and agree an appropriate format and outputs. To achieve this it is therefore proposed in conjunction with the Bedfordshire Museum Service, to conduct detailed consultations with local interest groups as well as 'focus groups' drawn from all sections of the local community thereby ensuring that the Centre is relevant to their needs. Thereafter a detailed scheme will be put forward and will be worked up for implementation around the Millennium.

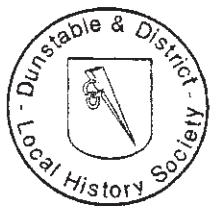
** Although it has been stated here that a Heritage Centre should be near the Priory, this need not necessarily be so and in fact it is open to question. Other areas of the town will be considered and it may be that an existing building can be converted. No definite decision has been made at the present time. (C.B.)*

Bedfordshire Local History AGM

This meeting will be held at Newnham Middle School, Polhill Avenue, Bedford on Saturday 10th May. A brief business meeting at 2.15 pm. will be followed at 3pm. by a talk on manors and manor court records by Kevin Ward, of the County Record Office. Members are welcome for the whole meeting or just for the lecture.

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The Chairman writes . . .



Dunstable & District Local History Society

President: Nicholas T. Bagshawe M.A., F.C.A.



I thought you would like to see our new letter heading. We have included two logos. On the left is our standard one which is shown on all the Society's publications. It illustrates the first known arms of the town as shown on the shield held by one of a set of figures in the Priory Church roof.

We felt that a second, more modern, yet historic symbol of Dunstable should also be shown, hence the sketch of the former Town Hall, which was such a landmark and stood on the western side of High Street North, near the cross-roads, on the site of the present Abbey National Building Society. Built and opened in 1880 to replace the previous Town Hall, which was burned down the preceding year, this character building, with its four-sided clock, was demolished in 1966 and has been much missed ever since.

So the two drawings balance one another, the one, indeed 'ancient of days', the other well within living memory.

Book update

The Society's first book in the intended series under the title of 'Old Trades of Dunstable' has been very successful and well received. Within a month of its launch at our November meeting we were virtually out of our 500 print order and we had an extra 100 run off. Many purchasers came back for additional copies to send to relations and friends as a Christmas gift and apart from this country we know that copies have gone to Canada, U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand, Europe and Africa. A number of interesting items and details have emerged, included in which is the number of people who remembered going out, when they were young, to the countryside round about and collecting poppy petals, or dandelion roots, or elder flowers, or some some such for Mr. Flemons. Their faces lit up when they talked about their childhood recollections.

We are indebted to the *Dunstable Gazette* for some excellent publicity and there were also mentions elsewhere, including parish and church magazines and a column review in the *Bedfordshire Magazine*. We were also invited by the organisers to have a table at the November and December Craft Fayres at the Queensway Hall, to publicise and sell the book and thereby, at the same time, promote Dunstable.

Mr Tom Bagshawe

At our Bagshawe's evening many references were made to Tom Bagshawe, our President's father, and an eminent man who did a great deal for Dunstable. He was educated initially at the Grammar School and there is one very interesting reference in the Dunstable School magazine of summer 1912. In a list of winners and placed boys at the school Athletics meeting, it reports :

220 yards (under 11) - 1, Gutteridge (D); Time 34 ²/₅ s.
2, Cooper ii (D); 3, Bagshawe (D) .

The (D) stands for Dunstable House, one of the houses at the school at that time.

What an interesting trio who took the first three places of this under-eleven race on the school field in West Parade nearly 85 years ago! The winner, Gutteridge, was of the farming branch of that name, well established in the town for many years. (Matthew Street is named after farmer and landowner Matthew Gutteridge, who owned the land where this street was developed). Third was the young Tom Bagshawe, then living with his family at Grove House. Second, Cooper ii, Frank and the younger of the two brothers at the school, was the future Gary Cooper. Tom and Frank (Gary) used to play together in the trees and garden of Grove House. Local History in the making.

Bedfordshire Conference in Dunstable

On June 14th the Dunstable Society will be host to the Bedfordshire Local History Conference. We shall be inviting members from all over the county to join us for the day and hear talks on the archaeology of the area, the history of Dunstable Priory and a talk by our local history publisher, Paul Bowes.

The programme will start at 10.00 a.m. and end at approximately 4.00 p.m., with lunch being served at the Methodist Hall. The cost will be £8.00 for the day and we hope that some of you will take the opportunity to meet other people with similar interests from different parts of Bedfordshire.

Cecil Rhodes : The Dunstable Connection

Towards the end of last year the BBC serialised the life and story of Cecil Rhodes (1853 - 1902), English statesman and financier who made a fortune in diamonds in Africa, founded Rhodesia and was Prime Minister of Cape Colony 1890 - 96.

There is an interesting connection between Cecil Rhodes and Dunstable, as those of you who take the *Dunstable Gazette* may have read. But to put you all in the picture and, perhaps, add a little more detail . . .

Living at 108 High Street North, Dunstable (earlier no. 275) was a gentleman by the name of Charles Hinton. This house is the end one of a row of tall houses, still standing, between Ashton Road and George Street, and at the time we are referring to, adjacent to Charles Smy's photographic shop and studio. Soon after the First World War, when he was a pharmacist and dentist with the rank of Staff Sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps, Charles Hinton lived in Dunstable and set up a dentist's surgery in the house mentioned. He was also to own a chemist's shop next to the lower gates of Dunstable Grammar School.

With his tall figure, homburg hat and his quick, striding walk, Charles Hinton was soon easily recognisable in the town and in fact he became one of Dunstable's well-known characters. He served for a spell on the Borough Council and for several years was a Governor of the Grammar School. He was very interested in the arts and was a popular performer and leading character (also as Secretary) in the then *Dunstable Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society*. He was a member of several charitable organisations.

His full name was Gilbert Cecil Charles Hinton and he was born at Kimberley, South Africa, in 1882. The doctor who delivered him was Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, who later led the famous Jameson Raid. His father, Gilbert Hinton, was a very close friend of Cecil Rhodes (as was, of course, Jameson) and in fact he was his mining engineer for many years. Thus Charles Hinton became the godson of Cecil Rhodes.

The young Charles and his family left Africa around the end of the last century and went to live in Australia, where Charles took a B.A. degree at Hobart University. Among no doubt many, Charles Hinton had one particular adventure in the war, where he served at Gallipoli and in Egypt. He was captured by the Turks and given a cigarette by one of the enemy. Before he had finished the cigarette the British conducted a counter attack and Charles Hinton found himself captured by his own side. He used to say afterwards that few soldiers could have been a prisoner of war for such a short time! On another occasion a British soldier was brought to him with a wounded leg for treatment, covered in blood and flies. The soldier turned out to be the unforgettable R.S.M. Odell, who played such a big part in the Cadet Corps of Dunstable School.

Charles Hinton died in October 1976. A tenuous link between Dunstable and Cecil Rhodes? Yes, but what an interesting story about one of the town's past characters, for which I am indebted to his nephew, James Hinton, with whom I went to school.

C.B.

Studham

Sarah Williams, who is editor of *Parish Link*, the parish magazine covering Kensworth, Studham and Whipsnade, is writing a history of Studham in aid of funds for the Church Village Hall.



The book will be about the social side of village life and the life of the people of the village through the years, rather than about the buildings and historical facts.

The aim is to make the growing number of people who have moved into Studham more aware of the village's past, and help them to integrate into village life.

If anybody can give Sarah any information, she can be contacted on 01582 - 873041.

Summer Outings

A separate leaflet, as last year, will be available shortly when we have completed all the details. Meanwhile, for your diary —

Tuesday evening June 17th

A visit to Redbournbury Mill and elsewhere.

Tuesday evening July 8th

By coach to the nature reserve at College Lake, Pitstone. Members will no doubt remember the illustrated talk we had from Mr Graham Atkins.

Saturday August 16th, all day coach trip

To follow the course of the River Ouse from Bedford onwards.

The Society's next book. It is planned to bring this out late September. It will cover 'Shops and Markets'. Fred Moore will be talking about the great variety of shops and their owners he remembers soon after the First World War and through the 1920s. Don Kemp will be giving his recollections of the Cattle Market on The Square and related shows and Omer Roucoux, a short history of markets from the Middle Ages. Again the book will be well illustrated and reasonably priced.

EDWIN FREDERICK HOLT

BY EDWIN E. BEASLEY *

In the Art section of the Luton Museum there is an oil painting by Edwin Frederick Holt. It depicts Redbourn Parish Church in a rural setting which includes a lumber-wagon and several labourers in country attire contemporary with the period of the 1870s.

This picture has two points of interest for me.

Firstly because it was this church which my wife and I attended for some 25 happy years when living in St. Albans. It is there that my wife is buried.

The painting is not a masterpiece and is insignificant compared to works produced earlier in his life and in a variety of genre. Seven of his canvasses were exhibited at The Royal Academy where he was a one-time student and won the Silver Medal for his Painting from Life section. The medal shows his subject: 'The Belvedere Torso.' The British Institute (now defunct) accepted 20 of his works and The Royal Society of Artists exhibited another 40.

I know this because my second point of interest stems from the fact that he was my great-grandfather on my grandmother's side and lived for a long period at 78-80 Edward Street**, Dunstable. He had a studio on the first floor.

He was born in Hampstead in 1830, married Elizabeth Bunker in 1858 and settled in Dunstable in the early 1860s. He did have periods of absence. For example he went to France to 'broaden his studies' but came back with a French mistress and with her toured around Great Britain earning a living with his painting. That means his work can and does turn up in all sorts of places. But he came back to Dunstable and in his later years confined his diminishing passion to painting local scenes, a number of which I have.

Some few years ago I was in the studio of an art restorer whom I had got to know well. I was there to collect a painting which he had restored for me. He knew of my connection and interest in Holt and

* The author has published a longer article in *Bedfordshire Magazine* : vol 18 n° 142, p. 235 - 239 with reproductions of four of his paintings.

** 78-80 Edward Street is now 54-58.



his work and told me that amongst a number of paintings a dealer had brought into him for treatment, there was a small portrait with the Holt signature and dated 1870. At my request he produced it with the comment that anonymous portraits had limited value, but seeing who the artist was, thought I might consider buying it. I looked at it at length, finally asking in no enthusiastic way: "How much?", "£220", he said. I put it down. "£200 then", he said. So I bought it. He wrapped it up and as he handed it to me he commented: "Of course, if anyone knew who the sitter was it would be of much greater value to them!"

I took my leave. The parcel held firmly under my arm was for me a priceless possession. It contained a self portrait of my great-grandfather.

I remembered that in my youth, my mother telling me how, in his studio in Edward Street, she had seen him sitting looking into a mirror placed before him and producing this picture which had been lost with so many others during the ensuing years. I had readily recognised it from an old photograph. Now I clutched it. Serendipity!

I never met my great-grandfather. He died in 1912 and is buried in West Street cemetery.

THE BUTTON PATH

From time to time people get in touch with us and ask if we can help them with information about the Dunstable area. One such request came last September, when a member of the British Button Society wrote to ask about the "button path" at Kensworth House and the source of the buttons.

We were able to tell her that the buttons were part of government surplus stock (presumably originally intended for service uniforms) bought by Mr. Bert England after the war. Being unable to find any other use for them he had them put down on one of the drives leading up to his house at Kensworth. A roller was driven over them to flatten the surface and one of our members has been to have a look and says that it is still possible to see some of the buttons there today.

J. C.

An Old Traveller's Pocket Map, dated 1676

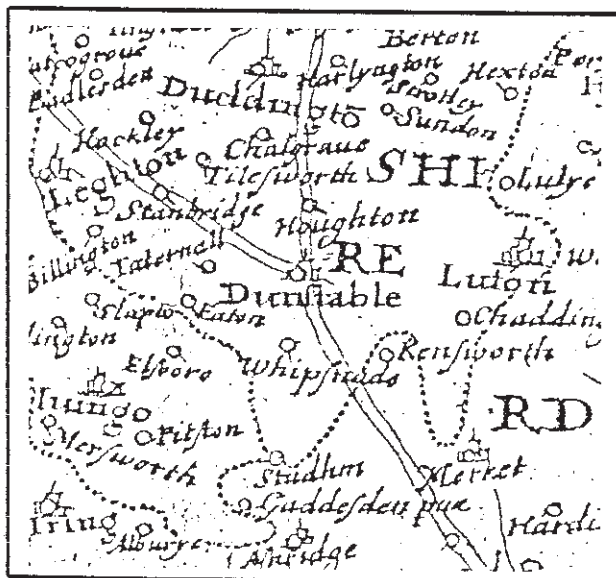
THE KINGDOME OF
ENGLAND &
Principality of Wales

EXACTLY DESCRIBED WHITH
every Sheere & the fmall townes
in euery one of them,
in six Mappes. Portable for euery Mans Pocket.

Vfeful for all Gentlemen and Tra-
vellors and all forts of Persons that would be
Informed of the Distance of Places. ne-
ver so Commodiously drawne before this. 1676

Described by one that trauailed throughout
the whole kingdome. for its purpose.
Printed and fold
By John Garrett at the South entrance of y^e Exchange
W: Hollar fecit.

Above is a facsimile of the title page with original spelling and spacing.
*** Here follows the list of the maps included in the volume



South Bedfordshire from the *Quatermaster's Map*,
(state C. Garrett and Hollard) 1676.
Reproduced here at twice the original scale.

We can observe the inaccuracy of the Watling Street - one mile west of Kensworth and of Markyate! This show that the one 'who travelled throughout the kingdom for this purpose' did not draw the roads. The traveller was actually Saxton, the originator of the map, more than hundred years earlier. The very good road maps by Ogilby were published in 1675 and have not been used here.

Some place-names : Duddingto = Toddington (was Tuddington on the Saxton maps). Hockley = Hockliffe. Taternall = Totterhoe. Merket = Markyate. luingo = Ivinghoe.

It is always fascinating to discover something old which has been hidden for years, or centuries, in someone's drawer. Recently Dr O'Toole showed some members of the Society a little book containing six folded maps. The size of the book is 9.5 x 21 cm, the maps are about 53 x 40 cm¹, so they are folded vertically in two and horizontally in six. The scale is 6 miles per inch, approximately.

The maps are based on the most famous map of the 16th century, the Saxton's map of England and Wales issued in 1583, with the title '*Britannia Insularum*' engraved on 20 sheets at the scale of approximately 8 miles to the inch.² It was used as a collection of sheets (as kept in the British Museum) or mounted on cloth together (as the copy in the Birmingham Public Library). This map knew various editions and revisions ('states'). In 1644, a version of it was copied very closely, though not traced, as a set of six sheets, approximately to the same scale.

This new version known as the *Quatermaster's Map* (state A) was engraved by Hollar and published by Jenner. The main towns are still shown, as symbols like the original maps of Saxton (right³), but the smaller places are shown as small circles.



The map was re-issued by Jenner in 1671 with a few roads added (state B). An advertisement said "There is lately published a new Map of England with an addition of the Highways and Roads from the chief Towns to London, never done before..." The next revision of 1676 by John Garrett (state C) is the one we have in hand. It is identical to the previous edition apart from the name change. Garrett was a map publisher and seller. He seems to have bought the plates from Jenner's estate after his death in 1673.

The revisions were made on the copper plates themselves, this can explain why some areas of the map seem very messy. This is particularly the case in our area where the engraver seems to have tried to include too many villages for the scale used, about half that of the extract shown on the right. It can also be observed that the drawing of the roads is rather inaccurate.

William Hollar, the engraver, is mainly known for his series of maps of London, before and after the fire of 1666.

Omer Roucoux

¹ The exact size varies from map to map. The widest one is that which covers Cornwall - 65 cm. The smallest covers London and the South East of England - 50 x 28 cm.

² The most authoritative work on the subject is : R.A. Skelton, *Saxton's survey of England and Wales* (Amsterdam) 1974. I am very grateful to Mr G. Armitage of the Map Library of the British Library who has provided me with copies of the relevant pages.

I have also used : R.V. Tooley, *Maps and Map-makers*. Batsford London 1949 and S. Tyacke & J. Huddy, *Ch. Saxton and Tudor map-making*, British Library, 1980.

³ This is a slightly reduced section of Saxton's map engraved by Kip for Camden's *Britannia* (1610) first English translation from Latin.

The Listing of Buildings

Buildings are graded to indicate their relative importance. Grade I buildings are those of exceptional interest. Only about 2% of buildings are included in this category. Grade II buildings are of special interest and warrant every effort being made to preserve them. Particularly important buildings of this group are listed as Grade II*. Some 4% of the graded buildings are in this category. All these listed buildings are included in the *Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest in South Bedfordshire*, which is available from the S.B.D.C. offices.

The first listing of buildings for Dunstable dates from 25 October 1951 and includes the Priory Church, the Sugar Loaf, 26 Church St., Grove House, the Cart, Chew and Marshe Almshouses, and the West Street Windmill.

In West Street 16 - 20 are presently being renovated; Ellis's barber shop, n° 7 has been dismantled and will be re-erected in the Chiltern Open Air Museum; 33 - 37 were demolished in 1979, they were in what is now the West Street car park.

South Beds District Council and Beds County Council have published a list of *Historic Buildings at Risk, 1992 - 1994*. This list contains, for Dunstable : 30 High Street South, 16 - 20 West Street and the Windmill. For Totternhoe : Doolittle Mill and Lockington Farm West Barn. For Whipsnade : Holly Frindle Bungalow and Rosemary Cottage.

O.Rx

Listed Buildings in Dunstable to date

Public Buildings, Schools and Churches

Church of St Peter and the Gateway (*Grade I*)
"Anchor" Gateway, High St North (*Grade II**)
Priory House, High Street South (*Grade II**)
Chew's House and front walls (*Grade II**)

All the following are Grade II listed

Grove House, High Street North
Ashton School (ex-Grammar school), High St North
Windmill, West Street
Methodist Church, The Square
Strict Baptist Chapel, St Mary's Gate
New Covenant Church, West Street

Almshouses

Marshe Almshouses (Ladies Lodge), Church Street
Cart Almshouses, 65 - 75 High Street South

Public houses and Restaurants

The group of *Old Palace Lodge Hotel* and *The Norman King*, including *Kingsbury Court*, Church Street
The *Borough Arms*, 24 Albion Street
Millefiori, 26 Church Street
The *Old Sugar Loaf*, 46 High St. North
The *Saracen's Head*, 45 High St. South
The *White Swan*, 91 - 93 High St. South
The *Plume of Feathers*, West Street

Private houses and Shops

Edward Street : 1 to 31 (odd), 48 to 54 (even)
High Street North : 20, 36 - 48 (includes 46), 81
H. St. South : 19, 45-49, 4, 24-32, 46, 48, 52, 82 (The Friars).
Icknield Street : 1 - 7
London Road : *Half Moon House*
West Street : 12 -14, 16 - 20, 26, (7, 33 - 37)

The Old Palace Lodge

Our secretary recently received a request from the General Manager of the Old Palace Lodge Hotel for a history of the building which would enable a leaflet to be produced for the interest of guests. After considerable research, going back to the time of King Henry I, she traced the history of the house under its original name of Kingsbury.

The result was a very well-pleased General Manager and an appreciable donation to our Society's funds. An extract from this history appears below.



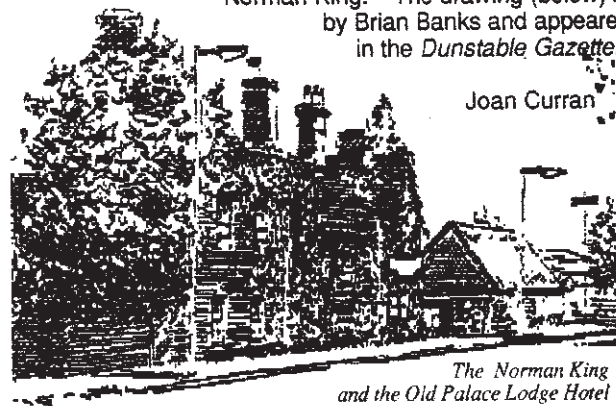
Kingsbury Farm in Church Street looking west

The picture (above) appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1816 and shows the Old Palace Lodge as it was then. At that time it was the house belonging to Kingsbury Farm, which consisted of 164 acres scattered through the three parishes of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Caddington.

In the 1920s the eastern end of the house was re-roofed, with a gable end facing Church Street, which altered the appearance of the facade. In the 1930s the house was divided into two dwellings, one part being Dr. Ashton's house, called Kingsbury Court, the other occupied for some time by Mr. Wallis, being re-named Old Palace Lodge. In 1959 this house was bought by Creasey Hotels and the following year, its refurbishment completed, it opened as the Old Palace Lodge Hotel.

In the same year a barn which formerly belonged to Kingsbury Farm, and was later Kingsbury Stables, was converted into the public house we know now as the Norman King.

On the wall outside is the following inscription : " On the site of this inn and the adjoining ground, Henry I had a palace built where he regularly stayed from 1109, and which was known as Kingsbury. King Stephen entertained his nephew the future Henry II at Kingsbury in 1153 when he made him his heir. In 1204 King John gave the Palace to the Priory and from then on the royal family stayed at the Priory and his courtiers at the Palace. When the present inn was built, the local Totternhoe stone quarry had closed, so the stone was brought from a Norman castle and a cottage near Cambridge, with Panelling from a medieval inn at Caxton in Cambridgeshire. Hence the birth of The Norman King. The drawing (below) is by Brian Banks and appeared in the *Dunstable Gazette*.



The Norman King and the Old Palace Lodge Hotel in Church Street looking east