

# NEWSLETTER

Dunstable & District Local History Society

No. 55

August 2020



## Chairman's Notes

**H**ere's another extra edition of our newsletter, hopefully providing you with something interesting to read during the lockdown as well as letting you know that the History Society is very much alive and kicking!

We are using money saved by the cancellation of some of our meetings to pay for the cost of printing this publication and posting it to everyone. Before the Covid crisis we had already arranged speakers for our forthcoming monthly meetings but we are still not certain whether these will go ahead. So, we have decided not to go to the expense of printing and mailing our usual programme card of events. Instead, here they are alongside. But, I emphasise, it is not at all certain whether we will be able to meet with appropriate social distancing at the church hall or whether all our booked speakers will still be able to attend. So, watch out for announcements on our website, in the Gazette or at our usual poster sites.

Meanwhile, even though the council offices are closed to the public, we have still been making occasional visits to our research rooms there to answer queries. One quite major delivery to us has been the photo archive of the late Richard W Bagshawe, which had been under the guardianship of our President, Paul Bowes. There are 21 volumes of snapshots, many of which are part of the research for Bagshawe's book on Roman Roads of Britain. Our committee member Jenny Dilnot has undertaken the mammoth task of digitising any of the photos which are particularly relevant to Dunstable.

In the last newsletter I wrote about Queen Katherine's Court, the new homes now completed on the old Woolworth's site. I mentioned the rumoured existence of a postcard of Catherine's Walk which was said to be an old name for Church Walk, alongside the new development. Well, a copy of the postcard has now turned up and is reproduced here. It's clearly NOT Church Walk and seems to be one of the walkways in Priory Gardens. Anyone know for sure?

While researching the postcard, we found that adverts on the internet are calling the new development Montpellier Mews. This, of course, is the well-known address of the familiar building further down High Street South. We contacted the estate agents and were assured that the internet references are wrong. **John Buckledee**



*The Catherine's Walk postcard*

### MEETINGS PROGRAMME:

#### SEPTEMBER 8 - DUNSTABLE - A VISUAL HISTORY

The collected drawings of historian Tony Woodhouse, using archaeological discoveries to provide accurate pictures of how Dunstable looked in ancient times, are to be published as a book. The history society will be given an illustrated preview.

#### OCTOBER 13 - VILLAGES OF NORTH BEDS

History Society member David Warner displays photos of picturesque villages including the historic lockup at Harrold, the old watermill at Bromham and the fortress mound at Yelden.

#### NOVEMBER 10 - FREEMAN OF DUNSTABLE

Actor Roger Parrott (The King's Speech) tells the stories of his father and grandfather who were both distinguished Mayors of Dunstable. Harold Parrott was the town's first citizen for three years during the Second World War and presided over Dunstable's VE and VJ day celebrations. He was one of the very few people to have been made a Freeman of the town. Haydn Parrott was chairman of the town's Operatic Society for many years.

#### DECEMBER 8 - THE BABY BOOM AND NOSTALGIA SHOW

Alan Haines gives a light-hearted talk which might remind older members of I Love Lucy, Tupperware parties, Family Favourites and the birth of the Twist. Our December meeting will follow its well-established format, with festive snacks and our famous (non-alcoholic) hot punch. This event is for MEMBERS ONLY, with tickets priced £5 to be purchased in advance.

#### JANUARY 12 2021 - THE STORY OF TOTTERNHOE

Ross Martin, who has lived in Totternhoe all his life, presents an evening of village photos, with tales about its pubs, quarries and ancient buildings.

#### FEBRUARY 9 - BIRTH OF A COMMUNITY

A mansion belonging to Sir Gregory Page Turner, of Battlesden, once stood on land near Sundon village. Now his park, on the outskirts of Luton, is covered by houses. Alan Campbell and Richard King show the results of their extensive research into the changing face of our area.

#### MARCH 9 - THE STORY OF WHIPSNADE VILLAGE

There's more to Whipsnade than the zoo! Ken and Chris France, of Hill Farm, give an illustrated talk about the village. This will follow the society's annual general meeting.

#### APRIL 13 - HUMPS, BUMPS AND NAMES

Archaeology provides clues about historic landscapes in the Dunstable vicinity, including Tilsworth, Hockliffe, Totternhoe, Dunstable Downs and Caddington. An illustrated talk by Stephen Coleman, Historic Environment Information Officer at Central Beds Council.

**John Buckledee**

# Aircraft factories in Dunstable



**D**avid Underwood, our membership secretary, tells the story of Dunstable's pioneering aircraft industry.

## DART AIRCRAFT COMPANY

Two Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany created what became the Dart Aircraft Company in Dunstable.

Alfred Richard Weyl fled to England in 1933 and, later, Eric Paul Zander who had been tipped off about his imminent arrest just 48 hours before it was due to take place.

The two men, who had both worked in the gliding industry in Germany, met up in London. Weyl had held a technical post in the Royal Prussian Air Corps during the First World War and later had been the permanent assistant to the professor of aeronautical engineering in Berlin and had worked in the German Defence ministry. He had also been involved with the Udet Flamingo aeroplane up until his time of fleeing to England.

In 1934 Zander and Weyl moved to Dunstable to be near to the London Gliding Club which had established itself at Dunstable Downs. Mr Weyl, a small man with glasses, lived at 25 Kingsway, Dunstable. My father remembers that he made furniture for his home out of aircraft plywood.

The two men set up business in barns in Luton Road, on the site which later became the Carter's scrap-metal yard and is today occupied by the Market Cross restaurant. Earlier information had placed the location on the other side of the road but this turns out to be incorrect. The barns had been owned by W L Manuel, a glider builder.

Here they constructed a small aircraft called the Flying Flea, following some home-build designs published in a best-selling book. They named their version Winnie the Pooh and tested it in the fields behind the factory, where its flights were watched and cheered by local workers. The factory was said to have an aroma of Pear Drop sweets by people walking past, who were smelling the dope used to seal the aircraft fuselage.

They were asked to make some replica gliders for the film 'Conquest of the Air' which starred Laurence Olivier. For this they built two Lilienthal gliders, a Cayley glider and a Wright 1902 glider which was flown by ex-Royal Flying Corps pilot Alan Curtis, who became a director in the company. During this time they also built a Grunau Baby.

They started work on the Dunstable Dart after a financial reorganisation and in May 1936 moved to 29 High Street North, Dunstable, calling their business Dart Aircraft Ltd.



Zander and Weyl's first factory in Luton Road – note the arboreal feature



The replica Bleriot XI

Also at 29 High Street North (which is now the Subway takeaway) was Mr Grice of Grice and Young, who sold tools and made metal parts for aircraft. At the back of the premises, now part of the Eleanor's Cross precinct, they had a two-storey building which contained an office, wood shop, metal-working shop and assembly shop.

They assembled the aircraft outside, backing on to Albion Street, using a crane to lower heavy parts or carrying the rest down an outside staircase.

The Dunstable Dart aircraft then had a name change to the Dart Pup, which first flew in July 1936 from either Blow's Farm or Lewsey Farm. The factory, employing seven or eight men, built a glider of their own design, the Cambridge, for Cambridge University. Another was built later with small differences. They also built three smaller gliders called The Totternhoe and a replica Bleriot XI for R J Nash of the International Horseless Carriage Corporation.

Then followed the Dart Flittermouse pusher aircraft and the first Dart Kitten which was finished by Christmas 1936. The next year they built another version, as the Kitten II, with a different engine. This aeroplane still survives at Brighton, Yorks.

Weyl would often buy items from Bernard Stevens, who ran the local hardware shop nearby. One requirement was Chamois leather to filter the petrol as it was poured into the aircraft's fuel tank.

A design was made for a larger two-seat aircraft called the Weasel though this was never completed. They also did many glider repairs at the London Gliding Club. In 1938 they started work on the Handley Page Manx. This was mostly carried out by one of their workers, Eric Burket, with metal parts and welding done by Grice and Young. The factory ceased work when the Second World War began. Alfred Weyl offered his expertise to help the war effort. But he had never taken up British citizenship and was interned, with many other Germans, on the Isle of Man. Police had arrived to take him away one night, while he was having dinner. Mr Weyl never recovered from the shock and from subsequent money problems, and took his own life on February 23, 1959.

After the war Dart Aircraft moved to the side of the Maltings, off High Street North. Gliders were built there and taken away in trailers. A Dart Kitten III was produced and was still being flown until the mid-1960s when it crashed. My father, Peter Underwood, built part of this upstairs at my grandfather's house at 219 High Street South. My father also drew a set of drawings of the Kitten III to be sent to Australia, where another one was built.

## Aircraft built

Pou-du-Ciel (Flying Flea) – 1	Lilienthal gliders for film – 2
Cayley glider for film – 1	Wright 1902 glider – 1
Bleriot XI	Grunau Baby glider – 2
Cambridge glider – 2	Totternhoe glider – 2
Airspeed Tern glider – 1	Dart Flittermouse aircraft – 1
Dart pup aircraft – 1	Dart Kitten aircraft – 3 (one survives)

# Aircraft factories in Dunstable



## SCOTT AND ZANDER LTD

In February 1935 a young man named Walter Roy Scott came to work for Zander and Weyl. He had built his first glider at the age of 13½ had then worked on building a glider for the Duke of Grafton.



*A Primary glider.*

While working for Zander and Weyl he started to build three Hutter 17 gliders in his spare time and Eric Zander suggested to him that they should set up another glider company.

They both left Dart Aircraft in August 1937 and formed Scott and Zander Ltd at 32 Lovers Walk, Dunstable. Here they built three Hutter 17 gliders and parts for another. One of these was for Captain Ratray and Mrs Amy Johnson.

The glider was written off in a fatal crash on May 14 1938 when flown by Captain Ratray. Amy later used a Slingsby Kiby Kite as a demonstrator.

Scott and Zander moved from Lovers Walk, setting up a drawing office at 27 Albion Street and a workshop just around the corner in Matthew Street. A number of Primary gliders were built there as well as a Totternhoe glider. In 1938 they changed the company name to Scott Light Aircraft Ltd.

With funds low they took assistance from Lord St. Davids who became chairman of the board of directors. Mr R C G Slazenger of tennis fame was a director. Here they built a series of high-performance gliders, the Scott Viking. The first was built for Mr R P Cooper of Cooper McDougal which went to Argentina. In total they built four Viking 1s and during 1939 they built the only Viking 2, a two-seat glider which was finished a week before war broke out.

This glider was pressed into military service but during test flights in October 1940 it developed wing flutter and both pilots baled out, becoming the first people to escape in this way from a glider.

The factory closed after a period making gas mask cases and Scott started Scott Aero Precision Ltd in Britain Street in 1941. But after six months this moved to Maidenhead.

### Aircraft built

Hutter 17 glider – 3 (plus parts for another and this survives)  
 Primary glider – 8  
 Totternhoe glider – 1

Viking 1 glider – 4 (one survives)  
 Viking 2 glider – 1



*A Hutter 17 glider*

## HAWKRIDGE AIRCRAFT CO.



*A Grunau Baby*

In 1945 Eric Zander and H E Bolton formed Hawkridge Aircraft Co. They had a small workshop at Bolton's home at Denham, Bucks. Around 1946 they moved to the old Dart aircraft site at the Maltings, off High Street North, Dunstable, with a work force of six men. Here they built a few Primary gliders. At least one was made up of some Slingsby glider parts and two Grunau Baby gliders which may have used some old German parts. They also carried out many repairs on gliders including a Horton IV flying wing. They repaired a Slingsby Gull 3 which at one time had belonged to Prince Bera, the racing driver, who called it "The Kittiwake". This had been broken in two.

They designed a training glider called the 'Venture' one of which, built in Australia, still survives in a museum. This was a two-seat side by side training glider. Zander left in 1947 and moved to Argentina. Hawkridge moved back to Denham and the company was dissolved in March 1952. Bolton emigrated to America.

### Aircraft

Dagling Primary glider – 5 (one survives, plus an A frame of another)  
 Grunau Baby glider – 2 (both survive)

Kittitewake glider – 1 (this survives now restored as Slingsy Gull 3)  
 Venture – 1  
 T.M.2 – not built



*The Venture training glider*

### FOOTNOTE:

In Buenos Aires, Eric Zander met a widow, a music teacher who had been a WAAF in England during WW2. Her husband had been in the RAF. Zander and the lady moved to Canada where they married and he worked for A V Roe in the aircraft industry.

They moved back to England where Mr Zander died in 1973 aged 79. Some years later Colin Bourne of the Dunstable History Society found a Zander in the phone book living on the south coast and rang to try to ask about the aircraft company. He discovered it was Mr Zander's widow's number and she gave him some of the company photos for the History Society.

**David Underwood**

# Grammar School Roll of Honour



**Wing Commander Robert Alexander Chignell was one of 46 former pupils of Dunstable Grammar School who were killed in the Second World War.**

Their stories are all told in a new book by Robin Marriott which is now available online.

Robert Chignell joined the RAF in 1927 and commanded 32 Squadron at Biggin Hill from October 1939 to May 1940.

He was then posted to the Far East and was killed in February 1942 while trying to escape after the fall of Singapore. His motor launch was attacked by Japanese aircraft and he was hit by a shell splinter. He had to be buried at sea and is commemorated on the Singapore Memorial at Kranji war cemetery.

Another former boarder at the Grammar School, Major Anthony Geoffrey Brian Wainwright, was in command of troops who fought a fierce rear-guard action in May 1940 to cover the evacuation at Dunkirk. He was awarded the Military Cross.

Ironically, having survived such a desperate battle, he died in a car accident at Huntingdon in 1942.

Because of the Covid situation, Robin Marriott's book is being offered as a PDF to download on a computer rather than being printed conventionally. There is no charge. If any History Society members would like a copy, the Old Dunstablians Association just asks for a donation which perhaps reflects the amount of time and effort put into its production. Email your name and email address to [dgsww2@btinternet.com](mailto:dgsww2@btinternet.com). Donations can be made to Dunstable Old Boys' Association via bank transfer to Barclays, a/c number 70353418, sort code 20-53-97.

The book, a valuable historical record for the town, is a follow-up to Robin's previous work, detailing the 66 Old Dunstablians who died in the Great War.

The war memorial library at the school, containing on its walls the names of former pupils who died for their country, has been preserved intact during the building of apartments there.

## The Gostelows of Dunstable

**Last summer, Chris and Jane Gostelow visited Britain from their home in Perth, Australia.**

They came to Dunstable for a day, because Chris knew that his great-grandfather, George Gostelow, had emigrated from Dunstable to Australia in the 1880s. During their time in Dunstable, they visited the Priory church and then 'talked to the lovely ladies in the Priory House tourist centre' who took their details and email address. They then emailed me and I recognised the name 'Gostelow' as one that I knew from previous research. In 1907, Arthur Weight-Matthews had surveyed the four churchyards of Dunstable, noting all the details which were still visible. I had made a copy of most of this information and searched the Priory churchyard to see how much of it remained. I remembered finding a Gostelow inscription and went back to check where it was.



*The tomb in the Priory Churchyard with the Gostelow inscription*

It's on a fine tomb down by the Church Street wall. I photographed it and found the details in Weight-Matthews. I then went on Ancestry to find other Dunstable Gostelows. I emailed all this to Chris who was very pleased with my findings and sent me the results of his researches. The first photo was taken in the Priory churchyard. It contains eight members of the Gostelow family. The deaths date from 1811 to 1865. The youngest is a child of 5½ while three were in their 80s.

The town's churchyards were shut in 1860, so it occurred to me that there might be some Gostelows in the cemetery. Mary Dobbs was very helpful in locating their graves, which I photographed, sending Chris the details. The second photo comes from the Non-Conformist section of the cemetery. There are five Gostelows buried in this area, three of them under the fallen monument. The youngest was a baby of five months, while the oldest was 70. The burials took place between 1863 and 1930.



### FRED GOSTELOW

I then decided that there must be other Bedfordshire members of this extended family, so I went through all the parish registers in our Reference Library. I found 43 references to Gostelow baptisms, marriages or burials between 1763 and 1812 in eight different parishes. I found a few more in the index to the Bedfordshire Magazine.



*The second Gostelow grave*



*Fred Gostelow*

The most interesting one was Frederick James Gostelow, born in 1867, probably in Matthew Street. John Buckledee in the Gazette's 'Yesteryear' says he was 'a musical prodigy. He was appointed organist at Dunstable Congregational Church when he was only 13 and became organist and choirmaster at St. Mary's Luton in 1888, a position he held until his death in 1942. He and his business partner, Albert Farmer, founded the well-known music shop, Farmer's, in Luton and Dunstable.' Fred Gostelow was also professor of Music at Trinity College, London. Chris tells me that Fred 'even made a trip to Western Australia, at one point, for both performances and to do some assessments of people looking for accreditation.' This happened in 1925 when Fred sailed on SS Highland Glen, departing on 29th January and disembarking at Freemantle. The ship was owned by the Nelson Steam Navigation Co. Ltd with a tonnage of 4793. Fred is listed as 'Music Examiner' on the ship's manifest. The third photo is of Fred Gostelow, 1867-1942, the renowned musician.

Chris and his wife were so pleased with my researches that they were planning to come to Dunstable again this year, but COVID-19 has put an end to this. I hope that, when it is safe, they will come and, together, we can see all the locations associated with this fascinating family.

**Hugh Garrod**

# Sad Farewell



**So much sad news this summer, with the deaths of a number of our members.**

## CYNTHIA TURVEY

We reported very briefly in the last newsletter about the passing of Cynthia Turvey, who died at her home on April 28 aged 91.

Cynthia had been a long-serving member of the History Society's committee and had been our treasurer for many years. In more recent times she and her husband Trevor had helped provide the tea and coffee at our monthly meetings. She worked for AC-Delco at Dunstable from 1943 to 1981, becoming secretary to the managing director in later years.



*Cynthia Turvey*

The cremation service at Luton, where numbers present were limited because of the virus restrictions, was attended by a number of Cynthia's friends, including members of the History Society and Dunstable Downs Golf Club. They heard in particular about Cynthia and Trevor's adventurous holidays (at one stage they toured Europe on a motorbike and sidecar) and about their first house in Drury Lane, Houghton Regis, before moving to the lovely area around Wellhead.



*Cynthia in her younger days*

## RON FRITH

Ron Frith, a very active member of the History Society, has died at his home at the age of 86. Ron was a member of the Society's committee for many years and had organised the sound systems at our monthly meetings.

He brought considerable expertise to the latter job, for he worked for the BBC as a studio engineer on numerous famous tv programmes.

Ron was involved in setting up the cameras and sound for such shows as Morecambe and Wise and the Two Ronnies. He worked for the BBC at Elstree and Shepherds Bush from 1962 to 1992.

Ron and his wife, Shirley, came to Dunstable from North London in 1960 and always lived in the same house in Meadway which they purchased while it was still being built, two months before their wedding. Ron took great pleasure from his allotment, just a short walk from his house, and was a member of the Dunstable and District Society of Gardeners.

He was a stalwart member of the congregation of Dunstable Methodist Church at the Square and served for no less than 50 years on the church's property committee. He was also a member of the South Beds Preservation Society.

His wife Shirley, also a long-standing member of the History Society, has now gone to live in the Tudor House care home in West Street.



*Ron receiving a presentation from our Chairman*

## DEREK BIRD

Well-known local pianist and organist Derek Francis Bird, a member of the History Society, died in Luton and Dunstable Hospital aged 83.

He learned to play the piano when he was only four and was a regular part of the Dunstable music scene from the age of 14, when he became organist at the Waterlow Road Methodist Church. Even earlier, when he was just 11, he was called upon at the last minute to provide the piano accompaniment for a funny-walk dance routine by comedian Billy Dainty, who was starring in a boys' club charity concert at Dunstable town hall. "Don't worry if you miss the cues, it'll be alright," said Billy, but the act went without a hitch.

Derek went on to play the organ at numerous weddings and funerals at local churches of all denominations, and for many years visited Icknield and Beecroft schools every week to play the piano at choir rehearsals and Christmas productions, as well as giving talks about various pieces of music.

At Northfields School, where he had been a pupil, he was elected chairman of the governors for 12 years and was chairman of the school's Band Committee at a time when the pupils gave a series of highly regarded concerts. He accompanied the band on trips to Germany and Austria.

For over 20 years he played the organ once a month for services at Chalgrave Parish Church. He also played on occasion at Streatley church, as well as being Master of Music at St Augustine's Church, Dunstable, where he restarted a choir. He was also accompanist to the Bedfordshire Police Choir for 12 years.

During his National Service in the army he was stationed at York, where he became the Garrison Church organist. He was invited to play piano or organ at many of the countries which he visited as part of his work for ABC Travel Guides of Dunstable, where he was editor of the World Airways Cargo Guide. He began work at the company's predecessor, Index Printers, at the age of 15 and at one time was Chief Wages Clerk at the cement works in Houghton Regis.



*Derek Bird with performers at a local concert*

Derek had been an outspoken Independent member of the old Dunstable Borough Council, appointed as chairman of the housing committee in 1965, and was secretary of the Masonic Centre in Dunstable.

## DENISE BARBER

Denise Barber, a long-time member of the History Society, died on June 13 aged 96. She had been a teacher at Downside School and Queen Eleanor's and had many memories of earlier times in Dunstable. As a youngster she went to school at Luton from Dunstable and would come home for lunch on the train and still get back in time for afternoon lessons. Her memories of sleeping on canvas beds in the Priory Church while fire-watching during the war are included in the book *Dunstable At War*.



*Derek Bird*

# How Victory in Japan affected Dunstable



**We continue with the story, begun in the last newsletter, about numerous Dunstable soldiers who were captured with the local regiment at Singapore in the war against Japan. As they returned home in the months after the Japanese surrender, the Dunstable Gazette reported week by week on their experiences.**

## **GNR JACK THOMPSON**

Fears for the safety of Gnr Jack Thompson, who had not been heard from for over two years, were dispelled for his wife and his parents, Mr and Mrs J Thompson of 8 Allenby Avenue, Dunstable, when they received a telegram from him saying he was safe and well. His wife and young son, Ronald, who was six weeks old when his father last saw him, lived with his parents. Their joy was the greater because they had been told previously by a survivor from a torpedoed Japanese transport that a man bearing the same description as their son and also named Thompson had died in camp. Gunner Thompson, who was well known in Houghton Regis where he had once had a bread round there for the Co-op, had been taken prisoner at Singapore. He eventually arrived home late at night but, nevertheless, many neighbours joined with his family to give him a 'welcome home' which lasted until three o'clock the next morning.

## **L/BDR SIDNEY RALPH NORRIS**

L/Bdr Sidney Ralph Norris had been freed in Formosa. His parents, formerly from Slip End, were now living at the Prince of Wales, Edlesborough.

## **GNR FREDRICK LINES**

'Arrived safely in India. Hope to be home soon. Writing.' That was the telegram which brought joy to the heart of Mrs E Lines, of 30 Periwinkle Lane, Dunstable, from her son Gnr Fredrick Lines, a prisoner since Singapore.

## **PTE WILLIAM J WHINNETT**

News came from Pte William J Whinnett, eldest son of Mr and Mrs G Whinnett of 228 Common Road, Kensworth, saying he had reached Bombay. He had received his first Red Cross parcel on the day before he was released.

## **GNR JACK GRIFFITHS**

Gnr Jack Griffiths, of 40 Stipers Hill, Dunstable, was safe. Captured at Singapore, he had been on a ship taking prisoners to Japan which was torpedoed. He was not picked up by the Americans as some of his companions were but was recovered by the Japanese and taken to Tokyo.

## **GUNNER K J (JIMMY) GADSDEN**

Eaton Bray mother Mrs K G Gadsden, of 8 Park Lane, first learned of the safety of her son, Gunner K J (Jimmy) Gadsden in a message he had written on a small piece of paper sealed by a strip of gummed paper.



*Pictured at Luton Station are the first local soldiers back from Japan. In the centre is Sergeant William Gladstone of Dunstable and on his right is Gunner Fredrick Lines*

## **GUNNER H MOBLEY AND PTE F THORN**

Although they had lived in the same street for several years and were taken prisoner at Singapore at the same time, Gunner H Mobley and Pte F Thorn met for the first time in Edward Street on their way back to their respective homes. Gunner Mobley made his way to 94 Edward Street where his wife and daughter were joyfully awaiting to welcome him, while a little further down the road, at number 36, another long-awaited reunion took place between Pte Thorn and his father and two sisters. Later in the afternoon they were given a rousing reception by the residents in the street.

## **BDR JACK RICHARDS**

It was eight years since Mr and Mrs Richards, of 63 Garden Road, Dunstable, last saw their son, Bdr Jack Richards, but they were expecting him to be home very soon. During his three and a half years in Japanese hands he had been in four camps, finishing in Tokyo.

## **L/BDR R G GODFREY**

A former employee at Index Publishers, L/Bdr R G Godfrey, notified his mother, Mrs Godfrey of 6 Dale Road, Dunstable, that he was safe. He went abroad in 1941. His brother PO J Godfrey, was lost when the destroyer Glowworm was sunk early in the war.

## **PTE JOHN DUDLEY**

Writing from Siam to his sister, Miss F Dudley, of 38 King Street, giving news of his own release, Pte John Dudley gives the names of five other Dunstablians in his camp. They were: Gordon Hutchings, Fred Eppy, Bill Hawken, Eric Burgess and George Josey.

## **CAPTAIN E W CLEMENTS**

Old Dunstablian Captain E W Clements had reached India and Sgt Payne, formerly of Totternhoe, was also free. His father, Sgt Payne, was one of those who received the Honorary Freedom of the Borough of Dunstable on returning from the South African war.

## **GNR RONALD TOMLIN RA AND GNR JOHN MADDOCKS RA**

Called up at the same time on the outbreak of war, two young Houghton Regis men, then living within a stone's throw of each other, were together when they were taken prisoner at Singapore and even during their long captivity they remained together. They received a great welcome home from the villagers. The 'inseparables' were Gunner Ronald Tomlin RA, of 7 Townsend Terrace, and Gunner John Maddocks RA, of 12 Mill Road. Hundreds of flags decorated Townsend Terrace

## **BDR TROTMAN**

Bdr Trotman, of 15 Canesworde Road, wrote home, mentioning some of the other Dunstable boys who would be coming back with him: Bob Godfrey, Bob Harwood, Jack Maddocks and Capt Robbin. Pte John Thomas Wright, of 135 Victoria Street, was also back home.

## **LIEUTENANT GEOFFREY MOORE, RASC**

A former Dunstable Grammar School boy, Lieutenant Geoffrey Moore, RASC, son of Mr and Mrs C F Moore, of 21 High Street South, Dunstable, was also released from prison. He had been captured at Singapore. A chartered secretary with Vauxhall, Luton, in pre-war days he had taken an active part in the affairs of the Methodist Church at the Square, Dunstable.

## **THANKSGIVING SERVICE**

The Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Lt Col D C Part of Houghton Regis, announced that the local survivors from Singapore would attend a thanksgiving service followed by a march-past at Bedford on December 13. In a speech in Dunstable he said that, of the 999 men of the 5th Bedfs and Herts Regiment who went to Singapore, 300 had not some back.

**John Buckledee**

# British Newspaper Archives



The British Newspaper Archives have a vast and varied collection of newspapers but unfortunately not the *Dunstable Gazette*. Here are some examples.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - MONDAY 06 DECEMBER 1773**

DUNSTABLE FAIR. WHEREAS a Servant-Man was on the 12th November last, sent to Dunstable with 39 Ewe Sheep, branded on each side I. G. and says he sold 30 of them at the fair, and that he lost several of them upon the Downs the Night before going from Hempstead, and that two died with overdriving and, as there is great Reason to believe that he has not given a proper Account of them, it is earnestly deferred that the Purchaser or Purchasers of the said sheep will immediately direct a line expressing the Number they bought, and the price they gave to be left for J.G. at the White Hart at Watford.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - MONDAY 10 MARCH 1783**

BOARD and EDUCATION AT Mrs. SHELTON's, Dunstable. YOUNG LADIES are genteely Boarded and carefully Instructed the English Tongue, with all Manner of Plain and Fine Needlework at Fourteen Pounds per Year, and One Guinea Entrance. Parlour Boarders, Twenty Pounds per Year, and Two Guineas Entrance. Music, Dancing, &c. by the best Masters. Vacations twice a Year, Midsummer and Christmas, Month each.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - SATURDAY 22 JANUARY 1791**

DUNSTABLE SCHOOL. T GRESHAM and SON beg Leave to inform their Friends, and the Public in general, That their SCHOOL will Open again for the Reception of Boarders on Monday the 14th of January, Terms for Board, English Grammar, Writing, Arithmetic, \*Mensuration, &c. Fourteen Pounds a Year. Entrance, One Guinea. Music, Dancing, &c. the customary Terms (\*Math Rules for finding lengths, volume)

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - SATURDAY 02 JUNE 1798**

To be SOLD by PRIVATE CONTRACT, And Entered upon at Michaelmas next. A Brick and Tiled DWELLING HOUSE, containing Parlour, Kitchen, Pantry, Wash house, four good Bed-Chambers, and two Cellars, Stabling for four Horses, large Barn and other Out-houses, a \*Pightle of Pasture (\*small field or enclosure) and three Tenements adjoining, situate near the Church in DUNSTABLE, Bedfordshire.

Dunstable is a healthy Situation, distant from London 34 Miles, and affords, from the Number of Coaches daily passing through, almost hourly Means of Conveyance to and from Town.

There are many advertisements for the sale of property but few details as to where situated.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - SATURDAY 09 MARCH 1793**

To be SOLD by AUCTION, By PHILIP GUTTERIDGE, At the Red-Lion Inn, Dunstable, in the County of Bedford, on Wednesday the 20th of March instant, Two in the Afternoon,

A Good-accustomed Freehold PUBLIC HOUSE, in full Trade, is known by the Name of the Swan-with-two-Necks, desirably situate in the Centre of the Town of DUNSTABLE; consisting of a good roomy Cellars, Brew house, tables, one Bay of Barn, good Garden, and a Well of excellent Water; in the Occupation of Mr. Rutland, Tenant at Will, at an old and low Rent of £12. per Annum.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - MONDAY 13 MARCH 1780**

TO be LETT, and Entered upon at Lady-Day next, The WHITE-HORSE INN, Dunstable, the County of Bedford The Household-Goods, Coppers, and Brewing-Utensils, to be sold to a Tenant at a fair appraisement.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - SATURDAY 12 APRIL 1794**

The WOBURN and DUNSTABLE LIGHT COACHES, (carrying; four insides) SET out from the Cross-Keys Inn, St. John's Street, LONDON, every Morning at a Quarter before Six o'clock and from the Goat Inn, WOBURN, at the same Hour, and arrive Daily (Sunday excepted) at Two o'clock the same Afternoon.

The Fare to Woburn is 12s.6d; to Hockliffe 11s.6d; to Dunstable 10s.6d. Each Passenger is allowed 14lb luggage, all above to be paid for. The Public may rely on the strictest Care and Attention being paid to their Property; and that every Exertion will be used for their Accommodation, by Their very obedient, humble Servants, W. HOOPER, London, W. GOODMAN, Woburn

N.B. No Property whatever, above £5. Value, will be accounted for by the Proprietors of the above Carriage, if left, unless entered as such, and paid for accordingly Delivery.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - SATURDAY 05 MARCH 1796**

Seasoned Post Horses and neat Chaises &c. To be SOLD AUCTION, Mr. Shaw, On Tuesday, March the 8th, 1796 at Twelve o'clock on the Premises of Mr Swift the White Hart Inn in Dunstable (who is declining the Posting Business), TWO Neat POST-CHAISES, three of Harness, and SIX young and active POST HORSES, full of Meat and in constant Work.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - SATURDAY 11 MARCH 1797**

Sugar Loaf, DUNSTABLE. White-Hart, St. ALBANS.

T. COATES, Sugar Loaf, DUNSTABLE, • T. HILL, White-Hart, St. ALBANS, return their grateful Thanks to the Nobility, Gentry, and Public general, for their former Favours, and beg Leave to inform them they have lowered the Price POSTING to ONE SHILLING per MILE, and humbly solicit them for the Continuance of their Favours, assuring them they will spare no Pains or Expense for their Conveyance with good Horses and careful Drivers.

## **STAMFORD MERCURY - THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 1731**

George Fox, who married the Heiress of the late Lord Bingly, returning with his Lady from Yorkshire to this City, had the Misfortune to be robb'd on the Road near Dunstable, where they lodged, of Jewels, Plate, &c, to a great Value.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - MONDAY 10 MAY 1779**

WANTED IMMEDIATELY: A proper Person to undertake the Care and Management of the POOR, in the Parish of DUNSTABLE. The Number of Poor in the Work-House are generally from fourteen to twenty.... Any Person who is willing to undertake the said Work-House, is desired to apply the Church Wardens or Overseers of the said Parish, who are authorized to treat for the same.

N.B. This is the only Time it will be advertised.

## **NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - SATURDAY 10 MARCH 1792**

WANTED IMMEDIATELY: Persons capable of undertaking the Management of the WORK-HOUSE, in Dunstable, Bedfordshire.

Application may be made to the Churchwardens and Overseers of Dunstable aforesaid; who have appointed a VESTRY to be held on Tuesday the 20th of this Instant March, at Eleven o'clock, to nominate Persons for the above Business.

N.B. A middle-aged Man and his Wife, without a Family, will be preferred.

Rita Swift

# Memories of old Dunstable



**It's unlikely that there are any earlier photos of motor cars in Dunstable than this example, taken in Winfield Street in 1885.**

## MR EVERETT'S NEW CAR

It shows Mr Everett, of Brightlingsea, steering a De Dion Bouton automobile, whose French manufacturer had begun production only two years previously. Mr Everett had collected the car from a company in North London and drove it to Dunstable at a maximum speed of 8 mph. His wife Alice, a member of an old Dunstable family, had been a rather apprehensive passenger, wearing three layers of clothing and a large hat secured with hatpins and a voluminous veil. She wrote an account of the adventurous journey.



*Mr Everett driving a De Dion Bouton automobile in Winfield Street in 1885*

"My husband lit the lamps which heated the ignition tubes," she said. "They, of course, blew out almost immediately, as was the custom, but after several attempts they functioned to his satisfaction, for he stood back and lit his pipe while he awaited results. After a seemingly interminable time, he decided that as we hadn't been blown sky-high, and as the machine was still in one piece, everything was ready for the next operation. Swinging the starting handle vigorously round he endeavoured to start the engine. With a sudden violent lurch the monstrous machine's innards rumbled and the engine spluttered into life. So did we. We were treated to an outsize vibro-massage as the whole car joggled rapidly up and down, sideways and fore and aft."

The car, spewing soot-filled smoke, broke down frequently on its journey. Its brakes jammed, it overheated, the exhaust came adrift and even the hooter stopped working. But in those days drivers had to be prepared to make their own repairs and after exactly eight hours and thirty minutes the car came triumphantly down Half Moon Hill in Dunstable and made its way to Winfield Street where the travellers were greeted by Mrs Everett's parents, Mr and Mrs W H Barton. Mr Barton, seen sitting next to the driver in the photo, ran a shop in Winfield Street with his brother, and lived in High Street North. Famously the future film star Gary Cooper stayed with the Bartons from 1909 to 1912 while he attended Dunstable Grammar School.

## THE PRINTWORKS?

Catalyst Homes are building a new housing estate on the old AC-Delco land on the corner of Brewers Hill Road. They are calling it The Printworks which is puzzling because the famous print firms of Waterlow's and De La Rue were elsewhere in the town and the Waterlow's sports ground was on the French's Avenue corner.

There was once a pond on the site, which was filled in when AC Sphinx (later AC-Delco) moved its motor components factory to Dunstable in 1934. The pond area became part of the firm's large sports field and the section of the field on the corner, where houses are now being built, was utilised in 1941 to build a "shadow factory" for the Delco-Remy and Hyatt company whose works in Grosvenor Road, London, were in danger from German bombs. The firm, specialising in coil ignition parts, was making a wide range of electrical equipment for the armed forces, including components for radar, tanks and the Wellington, Lancaster and Stirling aircraft. The Dunstable operation meant that the vital war work could continue even if one of the factories were destroyed.

The Hyatt building concealed concrete-lined workshops below ground-level where electrical components for Allied aircraft were manufactured. After the war, motor engine parts such as alternators were made there.

A detailed account of Delco-Remy's war-time work was written by the firm's managing director, W A Crewe, and privately printed. Dunstable History Society member Trevor Turvey has preserved a copy. We sent the above details to Catalyst Homes some time ago in case they wanted to choose a more-appropriate name.

## ANCIENT BRITISH ROAD

Dunstable Downs Golf Club is interested to find out more about the ancient British Road, which crosses its 6th fairway.

We knew that this is the name given by historians to the trackway which was the precursor to the Roman road still known as the Watling Street. Famously, it crossed over another ancient highway, the Icknield Way, here at Dunstable. But the original crossroads was not in the centre of what is now Dunstable. It was further to the west, near the foot of what is now Whipsnade Road, and connected with the track which we call the Green Lane.

The Romans, when they built their substantial north-south highway, normally followed the route of the old British Road, but their engineers diverted from this at what became Dunstable.

The Dunstable historian Worthington Smith gave a description of the old route in his book published in 1904. He would walk many miles around the local countryside in the days before quarrying and housing altered the landscape, so he was describing what he saw.

He said that the old route, heading north from Markyate, ran partly on the site of a long hill, past the north side of Kensworth Church and Downs Farm, to the Green Lane. The Roman engineers decided to keep to the bottom of the valley, making a new road from Markyate to Hockliffe, leaving the British Road more than three-quarters of a mile to the west.

## CHANGES TO DUNSTABLE'S BOUNDARIES

One of the queries which the society answered during the summer involved the changes to Dunstable's boundaries, which are a continuing source of confusion to historians.

From the time of the Norman conquest, Houghton Regis ("Royal Houghton") had stretched over much of what is now Dunstable. But as Dunstable industrialised, its houses expanded over Houghton's fields and in 1907, after much controversy, the logical step was taken to extend Dunstable's official boundaries. It meant that what had been known as Upper Houghton Regis, north of Chiltern Road, became part of the borough of Dunstable. For instance, High Street, Upper Houghton, became High Street North, Dunstable, and the borough then had to pay for the local government services for that area. As Dunstable was receiving substantial sums in industrial rates (taxes) paid by the various factories in the town, it was only fair.

Further substantial changes took place as a result of the South Bedfordshire Order of 1933, when the Dunstable civic boundary expanded to the north, west and east. That was when, for instance, the boundary between Luton and Dunstable was fixed as the middle of Poynters Road. Luton had wanted to expand further west.

**John Buckledee**

## Greeting New Members

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

**Chris Brown**