

# Newsletter

DUNSTABLE & DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

N°6

September 1996



## Chairman's Remarks

Welcome to the new session. I hope that you will come to our meetings as often as you can and we look forward to seeing you. We have been very conscious of the high standard set by our speakers and the resulting successful evenings over the last session, but we are confident that we have compiled a programme that you will enjoy and that with that enjoyment you will find a continuance of the happy friendship within the Society.

We have not been inactive over the summer months. Many of you will have been on our outings – to Luton Hoo and Ashridge College, both of which were special evenings arranged for us by management of both houses; to the attractive countryside of North Bedfordshire and to Bletchley Park for the Enigma variations of de-coding and cyphering, which revealed a fascinating war-time story that saved so many lives and was such a vital part of those troubled years.

We have given displays and exhibitions on four different occasions, mostly on the theme of former trades and businesses of Dunstable. Our first was a voluntary one, at the Bedfordshire Local History Association AGM at the John Dony Centre in Luton in May. Also in May we accepted a request from the local branch of the National Market Traders' Association for a display in Dunstable market on three days during the National British Market Week. On this occasion a theme of the history of markets in Dunstable was developed and was much appreciated. In the middle of June, at the request of one of our members who works at Dunstable College, we were part of their Open Day and, with the use of display boards from the College, the result was very impressive. Finally we helped with another display at the Mayor of Dunstable's Heritage Week-end at Grove House, at the same time finding stewards from our members over the August Bank Holiday period to be in attendance in the Mayor's Parlour.

These displays, which bring notice to the Society and much goodwill, do not just happen. A lot of planning and time goes into them and for that we are particularly indebted to Omer Roucoux, assisted by our Secretary, Joan Curran. Many thanks.

A final item. Opposite you will find notice of our first booklet (or perhaps we can call it a book, as it will have 48 pages). Publication day will be for our November meeting – in time for you first, and as a Christmas present for family and friends and distant Dunstablians, wherever they may be. Reserve your copy now!

C.E.B.



*For the full story see pages 26 - 27*

## BOOK NOTICE

### OLD TRADES OF DUNSTABLE

DALES' DUBBIN  
&  
FLEMONS' HERBS

Colin Bourne

will be published by the Society as the first of a series under the leading title above. It is expected to be out early November. 48 pages, well-illustrated, cost £2.50.

This book contains a great deal of information, never before published, about the businesses and the families who ran them.

SEE BOTTOM OF THE LAST PAGE  
FOR AN IMPORTANT NOTICE

*In the last issue we enjoyed the memories of Ron Frith as an evacuee in Leighton Buzzard. Some children have rather less happy recollections of their compulsory stay in the country.*

Here is an extract from *I Wish I'd Never Had That Evacuee*. This is the true story of Joyce, a girl of nine who was evacuated from London to Dunstable.

I was nine when I was evacuated during the war. We were evacuated from St Luke's School in Old Street<sup>1</sup> and we were taken to Dunstable. We were all scared; we were all crying. You can't explain it. Your mums and dads weren't even allowed to the station. You were left in St. Luke's church<sup>2</sup> until the coach came and got you, then you were packed straight into trains. I don't know about evacuees, you felt like refugees. You didn't know where you were going or who was going to have you. It was terrible. Before we were taken there we were given our gas masks and a big label on our collar to say our name, address, where we'd come from and where we were going to.

When we got to Dunstable, we were put into a big school hall, and people came up and sorted you out. I was with two sisters and one brother. My dad told us we weren't to be parted - we should go with one another. A church lady came, and the lady in charge said: "There you are, there's a nice little family." The woman said, "I don't want *her*, she's too ugly." That was me. I cried. The voluntary worker said, "Well look, let your brother and sisters go with this lady, and you go with this other one." Well, I went with this very religious woman. I'm going to call her 'Mrs Brown', and it was really terrible. You had to get up early in the morning, to do housework, and go to Church, because the husband was a Church Warden. The people in Dunstable didn't like Londoners at all. Nobody liked Londoners. As soon as you got there you were called 'dirty'. Anything that went wrong down there was blamed on the Londoners, and yet some of those country kids were little thieves in their own way. But to their mothers, who, remember, were all Church people, these kids never did anything wrong. But us, we were the ones that did it all.

We were evacuated with our own teachers from St Luke's School. One teacher, a Mrs Hornblower, was a very nice woman, and we used to go and tell her how upset we were, and she'd pat us on the head and tell us not to worry about it - it wouldn't be long. Then Mrs Hornblower would come round and see 'Mrs Brown' and tell her she wanted us round her house for piano lessons. But it wasn't for piano lessons - she used to give us tea and cakes, the kids who weren't being looked after.

<sup>1</sup> St Luke's school was at the time an all-age school situated near the Old Street rail and tube station (EC1). St Luke's is now a primary school in Radnor Street - EC1 3SJ.

<sup>2</sup> St Luke's Church, built in Old Street in 1727-33. It was found to be unsafe in 1959 and the roof was taken off leaving only the obelisk spire and the walls. (*London Encyclopaedia*)

## When Dunstable Vanished Off the Map

Before I went to Australia, earlier this year I was shown a reference to Dunstable on the map. (*Australia in the 1970*, 3rd edition of the

*National Geographic Atlas of the World*.)

The location was in Queensland, 50 miles south of the Tropic of Capricorn and some 20 miles west of Springsure. I was most

intrigued and determined to discover whether it was a town, a village or a cattle station. I had a few misgivings when I could find no reference to Dunstable in the Queensland Gazetteer, but I did not let that deter me.

As I travelled I showed my map to Australians, who, without exception, shrugged and said "Never heard of it, mate, sorry." Public transport in Australia along the eastern seaboard is excellent but venture inland and it is a very different story. To get anywhere near my goal I had to travel on an alternative bus crowded with young backpackers playing music so loud I had to resort to using earplugs.

I stopped off at a cattle station in the town of Dingo. Nobody had heard of Dunstable, though it should be no more than 30 miles away according to my map. A young man with a pick-up truck and plenty of spare time offered to help me find the place. We set off, me carrying copies of *Bourne and Bred*, *Dunstable in Detail* and Worthington G. Smith's *Dunstable* for the inhabitants of what I hoped to be a place historically connected with Dunstable, England.

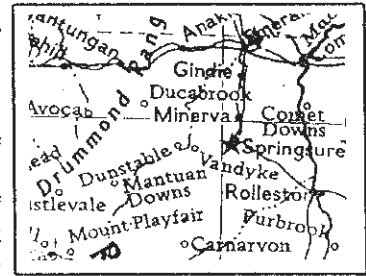
We drove north to the town of Emerald and then headed west to Springsure, a surprisingly busy and well served little town. There was a signpost at the crossroads of the town, but no indication to Dunstable. We called at the Post Office and asked for direction; the lady behind the counter said she was born in Springsure in 1939 and had never heard of Dunstable. This was bad news because according to the map, if the place existed it was no more than 20 miles away. She directed us to the Council Offices across the street where all the land titles were kept. Nobody there had heard of Dunstable either but they were very helpful. Survey maps were brought out for me to examine. Still no trace of Dunstable. We checked back through the records and found, yes! there had been a large cattle station named Dunstable but it had been subdivided into small farms in the 1940s. Sadly not one of them had retained the name of Dunstable.

Pat Reeves

*Omer Roucoux has written to the National Geographic Magazine about the problem. He has received the following answer, dated June 17, 1996: "We are not listing Dunstable, Australia in our current atlas, the revised sixth edition of 'Atlas of Our World'; however we appreciate your taking the time to notify us. I regret that I have been unable to identify other places named Dunstable, apart from those you mention in your letter."*

*Dorothy G. Lerda, Research Correspondence*

Omer's letter mentioned Dunstable in USA (Massachusetts) and Dunstable in Canada (Alberta).



« John Dunstable was the most influential English composer outside England before the Beatles. »  
Margaret Bent

## JOHN DUNSTAPLE musician — died 1453

Some 30 years ago I was mentioning to my pupils a certain *John Dunstable* as one of the important musicians of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. At the time I did not even know that a town called Dunstable existed, I was teaching in Rwanda (Central Africa) and music history was one of my subsidiary subjects.

*John Dunstable* (or rather *Dunstaple*<sup>1</sup>) is never omitted from serious books about music or medieval history, but until recently very little was known about his life and career, apart from his death on Christmas Eve 1453. He was also known to have an association with John, Duke of Bedford, a younger brother of King Henry V, when he was regent of France (1422 to 1435)<sup>2</sup>

### His life <sup>3</sup>

The name *Dunstaple* may indicate that his family originates from our town, but this is not documented. His stay in France was confirmed when it was shown that he owned land in this country. His connection with Henry IV's widow queen, Joan, is more firmly documented. He received from her an annuity, valuables and robes and after her death he passed from her service to that of her last remaining son Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and other members of the royal family. Despite these multiple royal connections, he seems not to have been engaged in the chapels of the three successive reigning Henrys (IV, V, VI). Perhaps this was because he as a layman was unable or unwilling to take such a commitment. This seems to show that he cannot be identified with a certain *John Dunstapylle* who was a canon of Hereford from 1419 to 1440.

Both Queen Joan and her son had strong links with St Albans Abbey, as did *Dunstaple*, who wrote at least one motet for it (*Albanus roseo rutilat*). At that time he was married and lived in London.

John Wheathampstead, Abbot of St Albans, wrote his epitaph in Latin. Here follows an extract.

*Here is entombed John Dunstaple  
Who had secret knowledge of the stars.  
He scattered the sweet arts of music  
throughout the world.*

*In the year 1453, on the day before Christ's nativity,  
the star transmigrates to the stars.*

*May the citizens of heaven receive him  
as a citizen, one of themselves.*

This epitaph in St Stephen's Walbrook London was lost in the Great Fire but was edited from an old transcript and restored early in the present century.

### His work

*John Dunstaple* was an astronomer and mathematician as well as a composer and two of his astronomical books survive. One of them is written in his hand and illustrated with high-quality drawings. The one

shown here represents a musician playing the psaltery (a kind of medieval zither) and constellations are drawn on the seat. His astronomical interest seems to have been almost entirely determined by astrological concerns. It is tempting to speculate that he was working as astrologer to the English nobility.

### His Music

No musical manuscript has survived containing *Dunstaple's* work. Fortunately, as he was recognised in his own time as a source of the much-praised 'English style', many of his scores have been preserved in manuscripts originally copied in Italy, and preserved more or less intact. But, recently, more unknown pieces have been discovered in the stiffening of 16th-century bookbinding. *Dunstaple* expert Dr Margaret Bent, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, has applied forensic science techniques of research to throw new light on the composer, retrieving lost work from these recycled scraps of vellum and reconstructing others that were incomplete.

Although *Dunstaple's* music was very much admired and influenced musicians of his time, especially in France, it is probably not immediately appreciated by contemporary ears. This music is an acquired taste, a bit like plainsong, the liturgical chant of the early Middle Ages.

There are some intellectual aspects, such as number symbolism and formal proportions, which, if recognised, help in a deeper understanding of these late medieval compositions. There is a passion, a sense of peace and beauty that speaks direct to the modern heart if we take the time and the patience to enjoy it. But, to quote Margaret Bent, 'we are on dangerous ground if we assume that our culturally constructed views on sensuality and aesthetic emotions are the same as *Dunstaple* and his contemporaries.'

Omer Roucoux

<sup>1</sup> The spelling of *Dunstaple* with a *p* rather than the more familiar *b* has been adopted because this is the spelling used in nearly all contemporary documents. His signature also shows that he spelt his name in the same fashion as our town at that time.

<sup>2</sup> John Harvey : *Gothic England - A survey of National Culture*. Batsford, 1947. Note that this John, Duke of Bedford (†1435) is not John Russel, 1st Earl of Bedford (1486-1555).

<sup>3</sup> The information on our recent knowledge is taken from :  
- Margaret BENT, *Dunstaple* in *Oxford Studies of Composers* (n°17). OUP 1981.

- Margaret BENT, *Dunstaple Musician to the Plantagenets*, in the booklet accompanying the compact disc of *Dunstaple's* music by the Orlando Consort. The illustration comes from the same source.

- Notes from a lecture given by Margaret BENT in Grove House in January 1996.

- Andrew STEWART, *Lost in the Stars*. *The Independent*. 29.12.95.

# The "Battle" of Brewers Hill – 1890

In the last edition of the Newsletter we referred briefly to 'The Battle of Brewers Hill', an infamous event that took place just over 100 years ago, in 1890, and continued until it reached a court case the following year. We promised you more ...

Brewers Hill, or Brewers Hill Road, was then a wide, unmade track that ran from opposite Houghton Road (where the roundabout is today), past fields and meadows, right through to the Green Lanes. Nowadays, the road joins Drovers Way but you can still carry on to the lanes. Elder Dunstablians will remember it well and the level crossing

that cut across it near the Lower (or North) station.

The central figure of the campaign to free the road as a local highway and away from restrictions placed upon it was one, Edward Franklin, grandfather of one of our Society members, Mrs Jane Stanley. In the Dunstable Gazette of 2nd January 1970, there was an article by Dennis Aris, a free-lance writer, about the 'Battle of Brewers Hill'. We cannot do better than to reproduce the following article (with the kind permission of the present Editor), slightly amended or added to where necessary. Mrs. Stanley verifies the overall story and all illustrations come from her.

PROCESSIONS, complete with bands and the observance of due ceremony, are quite common in Dunstable, but these civic occasions just do not compare with certain processions of the last century. Those held in 1890, to be exact.

Procession is perhaps the wrong word to describe these affairs, which were not considered a success unless ceremonial vandalism and arson were on the agenda. What took place could be described as the forerunner of the present-day protest march.

The sequence of events culminated in what is now known as "The Battle of Brewers Hill," and the man responsible was a local townsman, Edward Franklin.

Franklin had turned his attention to those old faithful butts of human wrath, roads and railways, and in particular the spot at Brewers Hill where both joined forces.

The railway company drove the Dunstable to Leighton Buzzard branch line across the unmetalled Brewers Hill Road in 1846 and put up a stile and wicket gate.

This was all right by Mr T.D. Cook, who had a farm at the Green Lanes end of the road, for hardly anyone else used the lane at that time.

But 42 years later the issue became live when town and country planners drew up a map of local highways in the Totternhoe Enclosure Award.

The Commissioner making the award decided that a highway existed almost directly from Totternhoe to Houghton Regis, passing down Brewers Hill Road.

This considerably annoyed the railway company, as it did not want people wandering across the line in carts and carriages. Mr. Cook was annoyed as well, for the award meant that he no longer had a private road.

So the two got together and locked the gates across the road. They also put up a notice claiming the road as private and that no horses, carts or carriages could cross without Mr. Cook's permission.

Immediately the Gazette was besieged with letters and the battle of words continued for almost two years.

*The cartoon on the front page of this issue was drawn at the time of these events by an unknown author. The man on crutches is thought to be one of the other defendants in the court case. Edward Franklin punches the engine, saying 'No appeal'.*



*Mr. Franklin stands by a map, pointing to Brewers Hill Road*

There was a tremendous cheer when the band appeared and, after a speech, Franklin ripped down the "No Thoroughfare" board which had been put at the entrance of the road. The board was kicked around by the crowd and thrown in a ditch.

A similar notice by the railway line was torn down and the staples were drawn from the padlocked gates, which were flung open.

By the following morning the gates were again locked and the notice board re-erected.

The next Saturday an even larger crowd assembled, including two local poets James Sloxell and T.B. Johnson, who later recorded the events.

James Sloxell wrote:

"Good people look out and see those about,  
Who appear like some saints in our sight,  
The gates they will close, our freedom oppose,  
And deprive us all of our right.  
But our General and Captain they both did agree  
Our freedom and right well studied should be,  
And when their decision was brought to a close,  
They must throw the gates open to conquer the foes.  
Then away went the Captain with boldness and pride,  
With a hammer and chisel and a saw by his side,  
The gates he burst open and the locks threw away  
And by the old farm the band it did play."

This was more or less exactly what happened, for Mr. Franklin "put the notice in mourning" by covering it in tar, then burst open the gates with a blacksmith's hammer.

The band marched up to Mr. Cook's farm just to make certain he heard that something was happening.

Franklin then made another speech at the end of the road, but while he was speaking the gates were closed and re-locked.

Other smaller demonstrations and gate smashing took place before Mr. Cook and The London and North Western Railway Company decided to bring a High Court action against Edward Franklin and eight other local men for damage and trespass.

Local authorities contributed to the defence of the four months long hearing, in London, but Franklin was taking a chance for there was insufficient money to cover the cost if he lost. But on November 26, 1891, a simple telegram arrived in Dunstable. It read "Cook has lost. — E. Franklin."

Ironically he then travelled back to Dunstable by train. When it pulled into Church Street station a huge crowd had gathered, including the ever-popular Borough Band, which played "See The Conquering Hero."

A fortnight later a mammoth procession was organised with a crowd of nearly 10,000 plus several bands parading up Brewer's Hill Road and back to Dunstable via Drover's Way. Mr. T.C. Johnson was so inspired by the sight that he wrote :

The battle's fought; a victory gained;  
No prisoners taken, nor any maimed;  
No firearms used, but arms of right  
To meet the foe — that monster might,  
Strong means were used to stablish might  
But custom, old, prevailed for right  
For men, once boys, were heard to say —  
"I've nested, played, and drove that way."  
Why, men of three score years and ten  
Boldly declared, as boys and men  
That man "His Rights" are now the same  
If not abused, will e're remain.  
Alas, alas, how oft we hear  
Men claiming right from year to year;  
Such men want Franklin from the mill

# BREWER'S HILL ROAD.

The DEFENCE COMMITTEE have decided to celebrate the success of the Defendants in the above Trial, by a

## DEMONSTRATION AND PROCESSION,

HEADED BY THE DUNSTABLE BRASS BAND,

Which will start from the TOWN HALL, DUNSTABLE,

At 2 o'clock,

ON THURSDAY NEXT, DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>, 1891,

AND PROCEED

Over the BREWER'S HILL ROAD, returning by the Drover's Way, and West St.

Any members of the Public who desire to join the Procession, are requested to fill in an order, BEHIND THE VEHICLES CONVEYING THE COMMITTEE and OFFICIANTS.

It is especially requested THAT NO UNSEMLY DEMONSTRATION OF ANY KIND will be made WHILE PASSING BREWER'S HILL FARM.

The Subscribers and Witnesses will be entertained

AT TEA

In the TOWN HALL, at 4.30 p.m., by the Committee.

They are compelled to confine the invitation to the above persons as the Town Hall will not be large enough to accommodate the general Public.

THOMAS COX, Chairman.

J. Tibbett, Printer, &c., Dunstable.

*A public notice advertising the demonstration and procession, followed by a tea, in way of celebration for the winning of the campaign. Note the reference to the Green Lanes as 'the Drover's Way'*

Who fought the "Battle of Brewer's Hill".

His love for right he fought for you!

Then honour him. Give him his due!

Don't let reward be empty, cold

But give his worth in gifts of gold.

Things quietened down in Dunstable after that, but Dunstable's greatest demonstrator was not quite finished with the medium of public protest.

Nine years later, he led a crowd of 9,000 and a brass band to London Road, where he burned down the toll gates.



*Cllr. Edward Franklin in his mayoral robes.*

Edward Franklin became a Town Councillor in 1898 and served to 1918. He was elected Mayor on two separate occasions — 1911-1912 and 1916-18. He died in 1918. Franklin Road, off Worthington Road, was named after him when that estate was built at the beginning of the 1930s. He left his mark on Dunstable.

ii. *Ivinghoe Deanery Magazine Advertiser.*

## HOUSEHOLD AIDS

INVENTED AND MANUFACTURED BY

### GARD and Co., DUNSTABLE.

#### SELF-CLEANING CHEMICAL PLATE CLOTHS.

These Polishing Cloths are a perfectly combined substitute for Wash Leathers and plate-powders, giving a rapid and brilliant polish to Gold, Silver, and Electro Plate, without wearing them, as must be the case when powders of any kind are used. Three Cloths in a box, 1s., by post 1s. 3d.

#### SELF-CLEANING CHEMICAL JEWEL CLOTHS.

These are specially prepared to enable ladies to keep their Jewellery in beautiful order. They are put up in a pretty box and deliciously perfumed. Three cloths in a Box, 6d., by post 8d.

#### SELF-CLEANING CHEMICAL POLISHING CLOTHS.

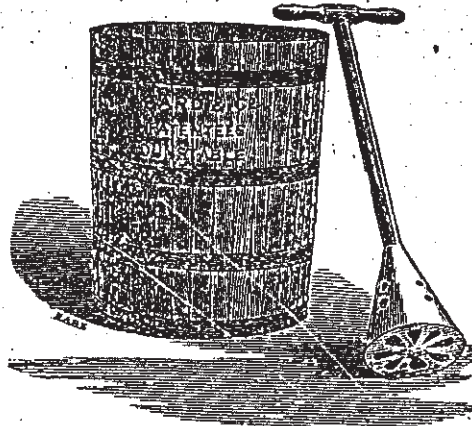
These are for polishing the domestic metals, Steel, Brass, Tin, &c., &c., which they will keep bright with scarcely more labour than the ordinary rubbing with a duster. Three Cloths in a box, 1s., by post 1s. 3d.

#### SELF-CLEANING UNIVERSAL POLISH.

This will put a brilliant and instant polish on all furniture, paint, varnish, stained floors, oil cloth, &c., &c., and preserve all metals from rust or tarnish without dimming the polish, such as fire-irons, knives, stair-rods, bits, stirrups, &c. Price 1s. per Bottle.

#### THE COMMON SENSE WASHER.

This is the Cheapest, most simple and efficient, Washing Machine ever invented. We guarantee that with our Soap Dust and this machine, the dirtiest cloths can be made perfectly clean and white (after only boiling them) at the rate of six night dresses or an equivalent quantity of other Cloths in ten minutes, without their being touched by the hands, except to remove them from the copper, and turn them over occasionally in the tub while washing. This is truly a WASHING MACHINE; not one of those mere rinsing machines sold as such, which require the greatest part of the washing to be done by hand before the clothes are put into them. Price for Washer, and Tub complete, 18s. 6d.



#### SELF-CLEANING CHEMICAL SOAP DUST.

For the Laundry, and especially adapted for washing Plate, Jewellery, frosted or dead gold and silver, Ormolu, China, &c. This is guaranteed to be a perfectly pure Soap and to save half the time and labour of washing, and warranted not to injure the most delicate fabric nor the colour of the finest prints, muslins, woollens, &c. In 1d. packets, Sample dozen by post 1s.

#### PATENT SALT.

This salt is used as a brine, and will cure Meat, Bacon, Eggs, &c. for a long or short time, depending on the length of time they are kept in the pickle. By steeping a Joint in this from 20 to 30 minutes, it will hang for a week or 10 days in the hottest weather, no blowfly will touch it, and when cooked, will eat quite fresh. Eggs soaked for 24 hours will keep fresh for nine months, be free of any saltiness, and not cracked when cooked. The brine will keep clear for years, and require no boiling. In Bags, 7lb., 1s.; 14lb., 1s. 9d.; 28lb., 3s. 3d.; 56lb., 6s.

#### THE PATENT SELF-ACTING MEAT JUICE EXTRACTOR, 10/6 EACH.

Agent for Aylesbury: LEWIS POULTON, Bookseller, Market Square.

### *Coffee morning*

Thank you to all those members and friends who came to our coffee morning on 7th September and who assisted or contributed in any way. We had a very enjoyable gathering and Joy and I were pleased to welcome you. A sum of £147 was raised for the Society's funds. CB

**LAST MINUTE NOTICE!** Owing to the forthcoming indisposition of the speaker our October meeting will have to be altered. We are fortunate in that Mr. R.V. Willis, who is well known in the area and is the author of 'The Coming of a Town - The Story of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade' has agreed to give us a talk on Leighton Buzzard history, on the same date. Mr. Vic Willis has lectured to many groups and is a member of an old established Leighton Buzzard family.

Sometime some little treasures of information are found by our members and we are always happy to share them with the Society.

David Lindsey found this advertisement in an 1880 issue of the *Ivinghoe Deanery Magazine*.



Gard & Co. plate cloth manufacturers, St. Mary's Street, are listed in the Dunstable section of the 1876 Harrod's County Directory of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

An item about this firm appeared on page 22 of our last newsletter.

### Aircraft Museum Visit at Cardington

We are invited to join a visit organised by the Bedford Local History Association.

It will take place on Friday 11th October 1996, meeting at 12.30pm at the Cardington hangars.

The party will visit the Airship Heritage Museum and the premises where exhibits are being prepared for the RAF Museum at Hendon.

There is no admission charge but numbers are limited.

*If you are interested contact Joan Curran. For security reasons it will be necessary to give your car registration number in advance.*

### Exhibition

Markyate Local History Society are holding an exhibition on 11th and 12th October

'Markyate Photographers and Postcard Publishers'

This will be held at the Baptist Hall, Buckwood Road, Markyate,

11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on the Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the Saturday.

Admission is free.