

Newsletter

Dunstable & District Local History Society

N°26

August 2006



The Chairman's Report

Joan Curran, Rita Swift and I are spending much time in the Society's room in Priory House. The aim is to create a research room where locals and visitors can come and look up information we have on local history. We have received material which belonged to John Lunn, Vaughan Basham, Alick Fowler, John Williams and Dunstable Grammar School Old Boys' Association, among others.

Starting from a completely empty room, we have designed storage, including shelving, filing cabinets, map drawers, desks and tables. We have put in a Lottery bid, so that we can construct a database, which Barry Horne has offered to design for us. This will help us keep track of what material we have and enable us to find it quickly when it is requested. We are not allowed to hold rare items, which need to be kept in controlled conditions. We have to deposit these in the archives either at Bedford or Luton. However, we hope to have sufficient funds to be able to have facsimiles made which can be kept in our room. I have done this with the old Admissions registers from Ashton St. Peter's Lower School. These run from 1926 to 1991. Our aim is that, as far as possible, people can research Dunstable in Dunstable, rather than having to go to Bedford, Luton or further afield. Early in August, we received the good news that our Lottery bid has been granted in full, so we can now proceed. We will need volunteers to steward the room, once it is up and running.

Many members of our Society have been involved as Stewards at Priory House. It has been a pleasure and an education to meet members of the public and to share our enthusiasm and knowledge with them. I would like to thank members who act as Stewards and to encourage other members to join us.

I have also given three talks at Priory House, one of which was so well attended that Amy Griffin had to turn people away, as we could not get any more people in the room. I understand that there may be more talks this winter and that I will be asked to give the Chew's House talk again. When I have the details, I will let you know, so that anyone who missed it last time can hear it second time round.

It was my great pleasure and privilege, last year, to interview people about their memories of WWII. I was one of a group who undertook this work. The plan was to publish a book of extracts and that Jean Yates would mastermind the project. At the last meeting, I announced that the book would be launched at our September meeting. It has become apparent, subsequently, that the book will not be ready by this time. The launch will now take place at the November meeting. Jean will come and tell the story of how the book came into existence, illustrating her talk with slides. She will, of course, come with many copies of the book, so you will be able to purchase your copy on the night. The suggested cover price is £9.99, although it is possible that contributors might be allowed a discount. We plan to hold the talk in the Church and serve refreshments in the Hall.

It is my pleasure to report, once again, that your Committee has worked very hard to bring you an interesting and varied selection of speakers and outings. I would like to thank the rest of the Committee, on your behalf, for all the work they do to make our Society the success that it undoubtedly is.

Hugh Garrod.

The Dedication of Dunstable Priory On St. Luke's Day in 1213

The Dunstable Pageant of 1963 celebrated the history of our town and was timed to mark the 750th anniversary of the dedication of the Augustinian Priory. In those days, Dunstable was in the diocese of Lincoln and so it was Bishop Hugh II who came on St. Luke's Day, 18th October, 1213 to conduct the dedication service. This was re-enacted during the Pageant with the churchwarden of the time, Stan Knowles, taking the part of the bishop. There is a huge painting by the North Door which commemorates both events – the dedication and the re-enactment (see next page).

Bishop Hugh II has an interesting history. King John (1199 to 1216) was short of the money he needed to fight his wars. The religious houses and dioceses had great wealth. This sounds similar to the situation during the reign of Henry VIII. John was determined to gain control of the church and its income by appointing its senior clerics. The bishops wanted to keep the church independent of the crown and for its revenues to be used locally. They also wanted Simon Langton to be Archbishop of Canterbury. John would not agree to this as Simon argued with the king's actions and intentions.

The Pope was so alarmed by John's behaviour that he issued an edict on 23rd March 1208. It not only excommunicated the king, but the whole of England. This meant that everything the clergy did would be illegal until the edict was lifted. All the bishops sided with the Pope except those of Bath, Winchester and Norwich. The rest either went into exile or retired into monastic life. The King took over all church land and revenues. During these times, John appointed Hugh, Archdeacon of Wells, to be Bishop of Lincoln. He presumably thought that Hugh would be so grateful that he would be the king's man in all matters. However, no one in England could consecrate him so the King arranged for him to visit the Archbishop of Milan. On the way to Milan, Hugh came into contact with the exiled English bishops. Hugh converted to their point of view and made obedience to Stephen Langton, who consecrated him Bishop of Lincoln on 12th December 1209.

France threatened war in support of the exiled bishops. John gave in and paid homage to the Pope. The edict was lifted in May 1213 and the exiles returned to their Sees. In the same year, Bishop Hugh II came to Dunstable to dedicate the Augustinian Priory. The charter for its establishment is dated 1131, near the end of the reign of Henry I.

The See of Lincoln, along with most of the other dioceses, was in a terrible state. A commission was set up to assess how much money the Crown should repay. Richard de Morins, Prior of Dunstable, was one of the Commissioners. Very little of the agreed amount was actually paid.

John continued to have trouble with the Church and other landowners. This culminated in the signing of Magna Carta on 19th June 1215. Hugh was one of the bishops who signed as a witness to this agreement. King John died at Newark on 19th October 1216. On October 28th, Hugh was a witness at the Coronation, at Gloucester, of John's 9 year old son, as Henry III. He was also a member of the King's Council until Henry III came of age.

Hugh was an active Bishop. He ensured that where religious houses had responsibilities for parishes, they provided clergy and that parochial revenues were spent in the parish. He established 369 vicarages throughout the See. He was an expert in legal matters and was appointed as an itinerant Judge. He was a severe and strict administrator, excommunicating the Burgesses of Dunstable for not paying their dues to the Priory. He continued the building programme at Lincoln Cathedral which had been begun by the first Bishop Hugh, who died in 1200. He also built a hospital at Wells. He was much loved by his clergy and by the people of his diocese. Hugh II died on 7th February 1235 and is buried in his Cathedral.

Hugh Garrod

The church of Dunstable dedicated, Oct. 18 A.D. 1213

Eodem anno, in festo Sancti Lucæ, dedicata est ecclesia de Dunstaple ab Hugone secundo Lincolniensi episcopo, presentibus comitibus et baronibus, abbatibus et prioribus, et nobilibus multis, et plebe cujus non erat numerus. Ubi pœnitentibus vere confessis, infra quindecim dies illuc venientibus, facta est remissio triginta dierum; et exinde in perpetuum, ad anniversarium diem dedicationis, vel infra octo dies sequentes venientibus, facta est ibidem remissio viginti dierum per eundem episcopum; a quo reliquie multorum Sanctorum, per priorem a multis amicis adquisitæ, repositæ sunt in majori altari.

From Annales de Dunstaplia p.42

Which translates :

The same year (1213) on the feast of St Luke, the Church of Dunstable was dedicated by Hugh II bishop of Lincoln, in the presence of earls, barons abbots and priors, and many nobles, and an untold number of the common people. A remission of thirty days was granted there to penitents truly confessed who came there within fifteen days; and thereafter in perpetuity, on the anniversary of the day of dedication, remission of twenty days was granted to those coming there within eight days, by the same bishop; after which the relics of many saints, acquired by the prior from many friends, were deposited in the high altar.



*The painting by the North Door of Priory Church.
It commemorates the dedication of Dunstable Priory on St. Luke's Day in 1213
and its re-enactment in 1963 as part of the Dunstable Pageant.*



John Lunn in conversation with Richard Bagshawe at the Society meeting of 14 November 1995

**John LUNN : In Memoriam
1915 - 2006**

John Lunn was born in the Lincolnshire village of Lea, near Gainsborough, on 2nd December 1915. He was the second son of George and Leanne Lunn, who had five children altogether. John grew up in a rural life of farms, barns and a two-room village school with coke fires. Home was lit by candles and

paraffin lamps. The bathroom had only cold water and beds were warmed by heated bricks wrapped in cloths. The church was an important part of village life, which revolved round the major festivals of the year. Summer was dominated by getting the Harvest in. Treats were mainly jelly, sandwiches, cream buns, iced cakes and home made lemonade. The highlight of Christmas entertainment was the Magic Lantern Show, with parting gifts of oranges, apples and sweets.

John's route out of village life was by passing the Grammar School entrance exam in 1926, probably the first from his village to do so. When he left school he worked as a supply teacher and became involved with the scout movement. He trained at Saltley Teacher Training College in Birmingham from 1935 to 1937. He taught in Handsworth for two years before joining the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in 1940. He became a captain in the South Staffordshire Regiment and served in Italy, Austria and North Africa. He was later responsible for rail-mounted guns near Folkestone. John and Eva married in Handsworth, Birmingham, on 25th July 1941.

After the war, John taught in Birmingham up to 1950 when he became Head of Homefield School in Worthing. He moved to Pipers Croft in 1960 when he became Head of Beecroft Primary School. John was also warden of Dunstable Teachers' Centre, which was based in his school. He set up regular lunch meetings for local Head teachers, so that they could meet and exchange ideas and concerns. During this time he was much involved with the National Savings movement and received his MBE for this work in 1975. He retired in 1978.

John was a regular worshipper at the 8am Communion Service at the Priory Church, being particularly devoted to the Book of Common Prayer. He developed an interest in the history of this building in particular and local history in general. He taught himself to read medieval English so that he could research the St John's Fraternity record of Dunstable and the similar fraternity in Luton. He joined every history society in the area and was instrumental in founding them where they did not already exist. He always had several projects on the go at any one time. John would travel to any archive if he thought it contained information on one of his interests.

John was a great conversationalist and had a wide circle of friends. He could hold a conversation on almost any theme. He was always interested in people and wanted to be helpful to them. He was very practical and could turn his hand to many tasks. If a job required skills he did not have, he would find someone with the requisite skills and persuade them to become involved. At the time of his death, John was President of the friends of Luton Museum and Vice President of Dunstable and District Local History Society.

John was a pipe smoker and derived great pleasure from this habit. He had his first stroke in 1998 and a major stroke while on holiday in France, in the summer of 2000. He was airlifted back to UK but never fully recovered. The last years of his life were spent in Capwell Grange Nursing Home in Luton. He became more and more frail and less mobile as time went by. He always responded to names he knew with a smile. He died on 7th April 2006 and his funeral was held in his beloved Priory Church on 24th April. His life was celebrated by the many people present. His body was cremated and his ashes buried, along side Eva's, in the Priory Garden of Remembrance at 11am, on 11th May.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF WATERLOW'S

By Joan Curran

The Waterlow family came originally from France and the Low Countries and the first immigrants to this country were probably weavers who came over with the Huguenot refugees fleeing from persecution by Henry IV of France. The name was originally spelt Waterloo, which actually meant marsh, and in 1628 a Walran Waterloo was registered as living in Canterbury, in Kent. Later on the family moved to London, where most of them settled in Spitalfields.

The founder of the present company was James Waterlow, who had a shop in Hitchin Lane in the early 19th century. As the business grew his four sons were taken into partnership in the firm, but a divergence of opinion among them in 1877 led to its being divided into two separate organisations. Alfred James (the oldest son) and his sons, Alfred Jameson and Herbert Jameson, together with Alfred Thomas Layton, set up one company which dealt with the country and legal part of the business. Sir Sydney Waterlow, with one of his brothers, his two sons and three other members of the original company, carried on the other part of the business under the name Waterlow & Sons.

This arrangement continued for many years until, in 1920, the two companies were united again under the chairmanship of Sir Philip Waterlow. He was succeeded by Sir William, who was in turn followed by Mr Edgar (later Sir Edgar) in 1927. In 1936 there were three members of the Waterlow family actively engaged in the management of the business.



Soon after James Waterlow founded the firm, in 1810, there were 20 employees at the main factory at Carpenters' Hall. Over a period of time a number of supplementary factories were built, plus a large establishment built at Finsbury in 1860. Even this soon had to be supplemented by other premises, one site being dedicated entirely to the printing of cheques, one of the products in which the company specialised. They produced the first Treasury notes for the British government, having already built up a world-wide reputation for printing bank notes. By 1936 many millions of notes were being produced every year.

The name of Waterlow was 'linked in the public's mind with the printing of bank notes, stamps, and other kinds of security printing', but the main activity was actually commercial work - posters, catalogues, booklets, travel guides, engraved labels, etc. The firm would not just print these items but also compose the text, produce the illustrations and design the whole product for the customer if required. They were fully equipped to carry out 'every known process in printing'. The machinery was updated regularly and machines not conforming to the latest standards were ruthlessly scrapped. Artists were employed for the designing and engraving of portraits and vignettes and the paper for notes was specially made for Waterlow's. Their work included debenture bonds, share warrants and share certificates.

It was in 1891 that the firm came to Dunstable, where 'ideal conditions offered the opportunity for building a model factory'. It stood at the far end of George Street, with its imposing entrance facing High Street North. Equipped with the latest machinery it was 'one of the show cases of the printing world' and by 1936 it employed 1,500 workers. The Dunstable plant was devoted largely to the manufacture of stationery, especially envelopes of all shapes and sizes. It also produced account books, pastes, gums and carbon paper, of which it supplied almost all of that used by government departments.

At the beginning of World War I the British government decided that it was necessary, in the interests of security, to issue a new currency. Within less than four days Waterlow's produced and delivered 7 million notes for the banks. When rationing was brought in in 1918 over 78 million ration books were produced at

a printing works in Harrow under the supervision of Waterlow's. Other wartime assignments carried out were stamps and other postal stationery for the Belgian government during the German occupation of their country and survey maps of France and Belgium for the War Office for secret service work.

In 1936 the company was awarded the contract for printing the Radio Times and opened a special factory at Park Royal for the purpose. There was a grand opening ceremony on 21st December, with a special lunch for the guests. A commemorative newspaper of the event included reports of all the speeches; within a few minutes of the ending of the last speech the reports were being written, edited and printed, and as they left at the end of the function each guest was presented with a copy of the complete newspaper.

This information is taken from the commemorative newspaper referred to above, a facsimile copy of which can be seen in the History Society Room at Priory House.

Mayors of Dunstable 1865 - 1929

1. Charles Stockdale BENNING
March to November 1865
2. Joseph OSBORN 1865 – 1867
3. Joseph GUTTERIDGE 1867 – 1868
4. Samuel BURGESS 1868 – 1869
5. William JARDINE 1869 – 1870
6. William MILLIGAN 1870 – 1871
7. Benjamin BENNETT jnr 1871 – 1872
8. Edward LOCKHART (1) 1872 – 1874
9. John Henry LIMBREY 1874 – 1875
10. Edwin William BROWN 1875, died 1876
Edward LOCKHART (2) part 1876
11. Richard WALL 1876 – 1877
12. John BAILEY 1877 – 1879
13. William Henry DERBYSHIRE 1879 – 1880
14. William James HAMBLING (1) 1880 – 1882
15. William Gostwyck GARD 1882 – 1883
16. Richard BARTON 1883 – 1885
17. Gilbert SINKWELL (1) 1885 – 1886
18. John LANGRIDGE 1886 - 1887
William James HAMBLING (2) 1887 – 1890
19. Dr. Augustus MORCOM 1890 – 1891
Gilbert SINKWELL (2) 1891 – 1892
20. John Butterworth HILL 1892 – 1894
21. Arthur Edward LANGRIDGE 1894 – 1896
22. Walter LOVE 1896 – 1897
23. Fred Turner GARRETT (1) 1897 – 1899
24. Alfred James PERKINS 1899 – 1900
Arthur Edward LANGRIDGE (2)
1900 - 1902
25. Charles BOSKETT 1902 – 1905
Fred Turner GARRETT (2) 1905 – 1906
26. Arthur William NASH 1906 – 1908
27. Albert GUTTERIDGE 1908 – 1911
28. Edward FRANKLIN (1) 1911 – 1912
29. Robinson Parker GRAHAM 1912 – 1913
Fred Turner GARRETT (3) 1913 - 1916
Edward FRANKLIN (2) 1916 – 1918
Fred Turner GARRETT (4) 1918 - 1919
30. John Thomas DALES 1919 – 1920
31. William Edwin SEAMONS 1920 – 1921
32. Edmund Hugh WOODS 1921 – 1922
33. Joseph ANDREWS 1922 – 1923
34. Frederick James CREAK 1923 – 1924
35. Amos GRAY 1924 – 1925
36. Lucy DALES 1925 – 1926 daughter of 30.
37. Alfred William WEBB 1926 – 1928
38. Percy William LOCKHART 1928 – 1929

To be continued

DUNSTABLE MARKETS

Omer Roucoux

That Dunstable is a market town is indicated by its name. 'The word Dunstable simply means a market on a hill, which exactly corresponds with its situation; and I venture to affirm, that any Anglo-Saxon scholar in any part of the world give you the same answer, even though he never saw or heard of the place before' said Lambourne in his book *Dunstablelogia*, published in 1859.

The very beginnings.

Dunstable came to be where it is because it was a crossroads between two important Roman roads, the Watling Street, now High Street North and South and the Icknield Way, now West Street and Church Street. The Romans had here a small station called *Durocobrivis*, where the traveling armies could stay overnight, find provisions and change horses. When the Saxons replaced the Romans as the organising power in the country, the roads continued to be used but became very insecure and the villages withdrew away from them. Actually, the roads became the borders between villages. Further to the north of Stony Stratford, the Watling Street became, in A.D. 886, the official border between the *Danelaw* (territories controlled by the Vikings) and the Kingdom of the English Kings.

A crossroads was a natural place for country folk to meet for the exchange and sale of produce, there was no need for a settlement of any kind to be there first; think of the recent development and growth of 'car boot sales', many of them started alongside a road where there was space to park cars for sellers and for visitors. A similar phenomenon must have taken place not long after the year 1027. King Canute, the Dane, had completed his conquest of England and established over England the laws of the king of the previous century, Edgard the Peaceable. The land had settled down to a state of peace and prosperity. Goods could be exchanged, transported and sold across the country. Specialised and surplus produce could be transported and convenient places became markets. They were not located at the centre of villages as, for reasons of safety, these were purposefully situated away from the roads,

but crossroads were ideal places for the purpose.

Houghton had been for many centuries Royal land and very likely there was a small market where local people exchanged their goods. The more important one, at the crossroads, had to be called something. It could have been 'New Market', or 'Downs' Market'. Why then *Dunstable*?

Through the Middle Ages, in general, the village green, the market place, the cross roads had been marked by a cross or a pillar; this was sometimes a pillory, that is the stake where the criminals were publicly punished. Such a post was called a 'staple', a word well understood by Saxons as well as later by the Normans. In the oldest record (*Beowulf*, 950 AD) it means a post, a pillar of wood, stone or metal. The old form *estaple* has given the French *étape*, a halting place. Let us remember that a 'trading post' is a market and not a pillar and a 'staple diet' was originally the principal commodity of a food market.

In the 14th century *staple* was a legal term for a market, but the same meaning was in use a long time before. So we can understand people calling the new market place *Dunstable*, 'the market at the downs'. We must note that the spelling *Dunstable* was one of the many spelling varieties of the name, it was only used as official spelling of the town from around 1650,

The Middle Ages

In 1100 Henry I became king and while visiting his Royal lands he found problems of lawlessness around the old Roman crossroads. He decided to recognise this new *Downs' Market*, and in this



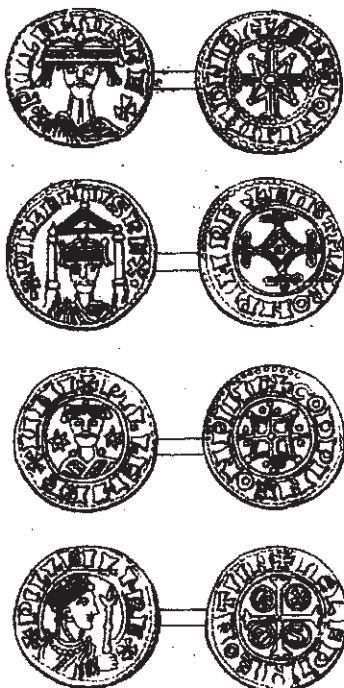
*Market scene in the Middle Ages.
A bartering scene*

way get some taxes out of it and encourage a settlement around it. Trouble at the crossroads was a threat to the peace of the highway; instead of solving the problem by force, as his father the Conqueror would have done, he founded a town. It was a good place for other reasons. The king had a residence in the nearby Houghton which was Royal land, the market would bring prosperity to the inhabitants and, at the same time, provisions would always be available for the court. There was easy access from the country side all around, cattle, meat, hides and other provisions could be brought without difficulty.

We do not know the date of this royal decision but we can say that by 1110 there was already in Dunstable a school important enough to have been given a teacher by St Albans. It was Geoffrey de Gorham and we know his story very well. He had been recruited in Normandy by St Albans school but he came too late to take his teaching post. While in Dunstable he organised a play 'The Miracle of St. Catherine'. For the play he had borrowed precious ceremonial copes but these were destroyed in an accidental fire. To repair the damage done he entered the Benedictine order. In 1119, he became abbot of St Albans. We can assume that nine years is a minimum time between his entry into the religious order and his election as an abbot, that is how we can conclude that in 1110 Dunstable had already a well established population.

The foundation of the Priory is difficult to date, but the facts are quite clear and the story is told,

in short, in a text 'Tractatus de Dunstaple et de Hocton' dating from 1290, is some 180 years after the events. 'The lord king founded the burgh of Dunstaple and built a royal dwelling near that place. The burgesses were in all things as free as the other burgesses of the King's realm. The king held a market and fairs in the place. Afterwards he founded the church and by authority of pope Eugenius III placed



Henry I silver pennies

regular canons there. The said brothers he made lord of the whole burgh by charter and granted to them also many privileges."

We know that the Augustine Regular Canons were already established in Dunstable in 1125, as Bernard, Prior of Dunstable, is listed with 14 other witnesses mentioned by name at an important chapter taking place at the Aldgate Priory.

The charter which is often given as the foundation document of the Priory was only given 6 or 7 years later. The document bears no date but can be dated indirectly, by the names of the signatories, to 1131 - 32. Here follows the extract which mentions Dunstable market:

"You should know that I, Henry, King of the English, . . . have given to the Church of the Blessed Peter of Dunstable . . . And the Regular Canons there serving God. . . the whole Manor and Burgh of Dunstable with the land belonging to it, and its market, its schools and with all the liberties and free customs . . . But I retain in my lordship the houses and the garden where I lodge . . . And I order that the men who shall come to the market of Dunstable have my firm peace in going and returning, and that any one disturbing them unjustly be fined £10. I also grant to the canons whatever they can reasonably acquire and that they and their men be free from the taxes and fines of.. passage and stallage

The last few words mean that the canons were free from the general taxes imposed by the shire but could themselves fix and collect the taxes for *passage* - that is for the movement of goods and passengers on their roads - and for *stallage* - that is for erecting stalls and selling goods on a market.

Effectively the canons of Dunstable Priory kept control of the market with great care. It was an official duty but it was also to their advantage. In 1221, market rules were drawn by the Prior in consultation with the burgesses of Dunstable. These are the earliest recorded rules in the country. The first of these *Laws and Customs of the Town* (Customale burgi) states that

Every burgess may rise on his property a windmill and horse mill, a dovecote, a bakehouse, a hand mill, a malt kiln and also a woodstack and dungheap unless the woodstack and the dungheap are a nuisance to the King's highway or to the Prior's market, in the opinion of the loyal men of the Town.

To be continued