

NEWSLETTER

Dunstable & District Local History Society
No. 51 February 2019



Chairman's Notes

Years of work and planning culminated in December with the publication of the complete translation of the Annals of Dunstable Priory, the diary of events written in medieval times.

TRANSLATING THE ANNALS

David Preest tackled the colossal task of interpreting the eccentric Latin of the original, and footnotes and a preface were provided by Harriett Webster. Stephen Williams, already an expert on the Annals, had met Mr Preest by chance (they are Old Boys of the same school and a colourful school scarf became the point of recognition) and their conversations led to the translation venture.

It all intertwined with the Dunstable Medieval Project, with Jean Yates and Hugh Garrod actively involved, and the Boydell Press agreed to publish the completed work. Your History Society has been poised in the wings, aiming to publish the translation itself if all else failed, but it was obviously much better for the book to be produced by a professional publisher with worldwide contacts.

The volume was launched at a day-long event organised by Dunstable Town Guides in the Priory Church, where there was a series of well-attended talks. David Preest (pictured) was there to sign copies.

The publication is of great historical interest and importance and is a landmark event for Dunstable.

WORLD WAR ONE EVENT

Dunstable Council was thrilled to receive national recognition for the World War One event held in Priory Gardens last May. The council has promoted numerous displays with a history connection over the years, but this was very special and it was no surprise to hear that it won the Best Small Event award from the National Outdoor Events Association.

Your History Society, as always, was very much involved and Becky Wisbey, the council's head of community services, has written to the Society asking me to pass on the council's thanks for our contribution. Joan Curran, Rita Swift, David Underwood, June Byrne, Elizabeth Pynn and David and Sue Turner were particularly busy, but many others turned up to help on the day. Thanks to you all!

REFURBISHMENT OF THE WAR MEMORIAL

Another major event for the town last Autumn was the completion of the refurbishment of the war memorial in Priory Gardens. Many



David Preest

townspeople and organisations have worked to make this possible, but the History Society's particular contribution was to provide a corrected list of names for the memorial's Roll of Honour. The fact that quite a few servicemen and women were not included on the original list has been a sore point for years, and a chance meeting with the Mayor, Cllr Gloria Martin, led to an invitation to the Society to put this right. It proved to be an immense task, and June Byrne and David Underwood spent over a year on the research. Even so, we would have welcomed more time!

ANNUAL POPPY APPEAL

Many members of the Society have once again spent many hours raising money in Dunstable for the Royal British Legion's annual Poppy Appeal. By December 31 the money banked for the

appeal in Dunstable totalled £39,823.75. Let's particularly mention Pat Larkman, John and Lynn Boon, Jackie and David Jeffs, Ann Ledger and Chris Smith, who sold poppies in the coldest spot in Dunstable... the foyer at Sainsbury's. The total raised at the store was £10,408.05.

RESEARCH ROOM BOMBHELL

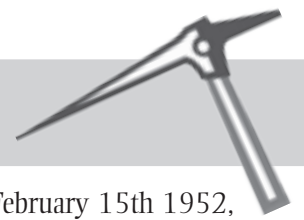
Dunstable Council has dropped a bombshell upon us by asking us to move from our research room at Priory House, where over the years we have accumulated a vast amount of material. Our room is needed as part of the creation of an area at Priory House for civil wedding ceremonies. The Council has been good enough to find us alternative space at Grove House where we are being given the use of two rooms, rent free, and our removal expenses are being paid. So, we mustn't grumble, but it will be a wrench to leave the croquet players, physic gardeners and tea-room regulars at Priory House. The move will take place some time in March.

John Buckledee

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 12, before we hear a talk, in our usual venue, about Dunstable Football Club. To save postage costs, we are not mailing out minutes and agendas this year, and this newsletter paragraph is your notification in case you have any issues to raise. Nominations for officers and committee members should be sent to our secretary Joan Curran at 5 The Paddocks, Friars Walk, Dunstable, LU6 3FQ. We particularly need additional members on our committee and, alas, Joan Curran has indicated that she wishes to step down from her position as secretary.

Bedfordshire's Gold Rush



How did a sleepy Bedfordshire village suddenly become the centre of the county's only known 'Gold Rush' in the 17th century?

The answer lies in a field north east of the Parish of Pulloxhill where a mass of what was subsequently described as 'shining yellow talc with a yellow matter mixed with it' was dug up by local farm workers in 1680. Charles II was on the throne and, after the discovery was made public, the pit was duly seized as a Royal Mine, (all gold found in the United Kingdom automatically became the property of the king). The Crown Agents then appointed a firm of refiners to assess the find.

WHAT WAS THIS MINERAL?

The 'Victoria County History of the County of Bedford' (Volume 2, 1908, Page 376) describes how 'in 1680 gold quartz was discovered at Pulloxhill, which was at once taken into the king's hands as royal mine, but it was found on working it that the gold did not repay the cost of separation, as it consisted merely of flakes of mica in drifted stones; the mine was therefore abandoned'.

A fuller analysis is given by the 'Bedfordshire Mercury' (Saturday 15th March 1890) which states: Mr Crouch (from Kitchen End Pulloxhill) writes: 'The report of gold at Pulloxhill is due to a bed of sand which may be traced from Pulloxhill Church in a north-easterly direction to the Thrift Wood. This bed of sand contains an interesting agglomerate. A specimen of this was submitted last summer by Mr Cameron to Mr Rudler of the Jermyn-Street Museum. He writes as follows: 'The rock containing the brilliant gold-suggesting flashes is a highly micaceous sandstone, mainly consisting of crystalline quartz with abundant mica. Crushed in a mortar, and the powder examined under microscope, the quartz is much iron-stained, giving the material a yellow, brownish tint, which conspires with the glistening bronze colour of the mica to suggest gold-bearing material'.

The history of the various attempts to find gold is confused; but about forty years ago I believe a quantity of the rock was dug and taken away to be tested, apparently without result.

Charles Crouch also wrote a letter to the 'Bedfordshire Times and Independent' which appeared on Friday 11th September 1936. He states that he had previously sent a sample of the quartz to the British Museum 'about fifty years ago' and that 'no trace of gold could be discovered'.

Later accounts give a slightly different version. The 'Bedfordshire Magazine' for Spring 1950 (Vol.2 No.12) identifies it as 'fools gold' (a worthless deposit of iron pyrites or Iron disulphide) which 'consisted merely of flakes of mica in stones and gravel which had drifted to Bedfordshire with the melting of the glacial snows at the end of the last ice age'.

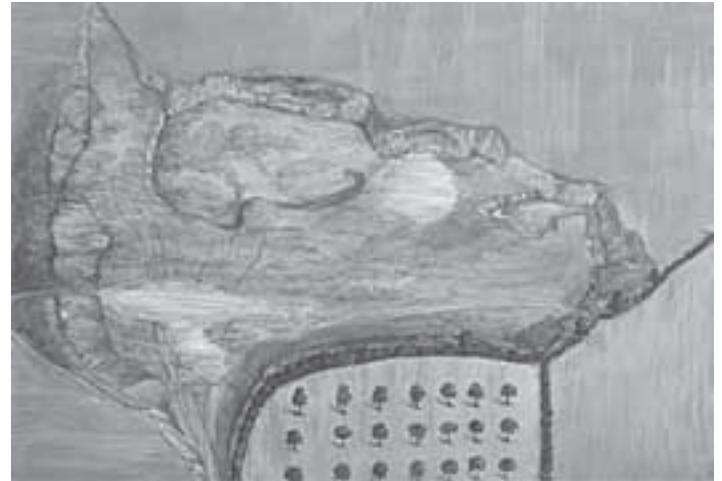
The 'Amphill and Flitwick Times' of 13th November 1983 confirms this view and further credence is given by Dennis Bidwell in 'Discovering Bedfordshire's Past' (2001) who believed the mineral was found and excavated from beneath a layer of top soil, clay and iron ore in the original field located at Gold Close.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MINE?

Again, accounts differ as to what happened after the initial find in 1680. The 'Amphill and Flitwick Times' article previously quoted mentions that Pulloxhill was besieged with miners busily digging out the 'gold' for months after the initial find.

The 'Biggleswade Chronicle' from February 15th 1952, however, mentions that the mine was abandoned after just 3 years i.e. 1683 (although it also added that samples of gold sent to the mint were reported to be 'of good quality'). An earlier article in the 'Bedfordshire Times and Independent' from September 4th 1936 contradicts this date by saying the mine was abandoned about 1750.

Certainly the mine was still famous enough to be mentioned in the 19th century. Thomas Fisher, the renowned topographical artist, drew a picture of 'The Gold Mine in Pulloxhill' around 1820.



Thomas Fisher's painting of the gold mine c1820

Less than ten years later we hear from the eccentric Dr. Kellerman, an alchemist and racehorse owner who lived at Lilley Hoo around 1828. He apparently made a proposal 'to pay off the National Debt with a vein of gold discovered at Pullox-hill'. His plan, of course, came to nothing and he was roundly ridiculed.

The Gold Mine was nevertheless still considered a fact. On the first edition of the 1" inch O.S. Bedfordshire Map (1834) we find 'Gold Mine' marked at TL065343 and it is also included within Calvert's 'Gold Rocks of Great Britain and Ireland' in 1853. After this date however, no further mention is made concerning mining activity.

During the 20th century only a few pieces of evidence remained to indicate that the mine ever existed. These included names on old maps which mention 'Gold Close' and 'Gold Cope'. Also in June 1980 a site visit was made by Stephen Coleman from Central Bedfordshire Council who reported water filled depressions in the field perhaps indicating where the original workings were located (Historic Environment Record No.10809).

CONCLUSIONS:

Whether real gold was ever discovered at Pulloxhill in the 17th century remains a matter of conjecture. We have the refiners accounts claiming they have found the precious metal, even though it was not viable to mine it. On the other hand we have later accounts which dismiss the finds as just coloured mica or 'fools gold'.

Whatever the reality, Pulloxhill will retain its role in history as being the only village in Bedfordshire which formerly had its own gold mine.

John Thurston

Lionel Charles Reginald Thring - Cricketer



LCR Thring is well known in our town as the first Headmaster of Dunstable Grammar School, a post he held from the school's opening in 1888 until retirement in 1921.

HIS CRICKET CAREER

His cricket career may not be so familiar to us. His first Minor County cricket was played for Wiltshire in 1882 and he represented Bedfordshire for the first time in 1891.

HON SECRETARY AND CAPTAIN

He was both honorary secretary and captain for Bedfordshire for that year, but gave up the latter post owing to the pressure of work. He was one of the prime movers in the re-founding of Bedfordshire's County Cricket Club. In 1894, whilst playing for Bedfordshire against MCC, he made his highest score for the county - 143, on the Dunstable Grammar School playing field (West Parade). He opened the batting and was not out at the end of the innings.

A FREE-HITTING BATSMAN AND A GOOD FIELDER

The Minor Counties Championship began in 1895 and Thring played 56 matches for Bedfordshire in the Championship until 1912, scoring 1,813 runs with an average of 21.58. He scored one century, 132 against Buckinghamshire at Bedford Grammar School in 1903. While bowling, he took 51 wickets at an average of 20.58, with best figures of 5-13 against Cambridgeshire at Fenner's in 1901. Mr. Thring was described as a 'free hitting batsman' and a 'good fielder'. He was nearly 50 when he played his last match.



Lionel Charles Reginald Thring

Lionel Thring was born in Uppingham on 5th September 1862 and attended Uppingham School and Marlborough College. He went to Cambridge in 1880 and gained a degree in Theology but did not appear for any of the University cricket XIs. Before coming to Dunstable he taught briefly at Wellingborough School.

FOOTBALLER FOR LUTON TOWN

In his younger days, he was also a footballer, playing for Luton Town from 1888 until the Club turned professional in 1891. On 18th August 1888, he married Jessie Margaret Healing, in Cheshire. They had three children, Elsie, born in 1893, Ashton, born in 1896 (presumably named after the school) and Marion, born in 1899.

BROTHERS ALSO CRICKETERS

His two brothers, Charles Henry Meredith and Llewellyn Charles Waldron also played cricket for Bedfordshire in the Minor Counties Championship. Charles played one first class match for MCC.

Lionel Thring died in The Grange, Ash, near Martock, Somerset, on 10th November 1934. His ashes were buried in Dunstable cemetery on the 15th of that month. Margaret, his wife, died in Limington, near Yeovil on 27th July, 1949. Lionel's father, Revd John Thring, was born in Alford and the Thrings of Alford can be traced back to at least 1780.

I was prompted to write the above after reading an article on Lionel Thring in the ACS publication 'The Minor Counties Championship 1912' edited by Julian Lawton Smith.

Hugh Garrod

Medieval Puzzles

I found the following puzzles in a book entitled 'The Book of Medieval Puzzles' by Tim Dedopulos.

BLACK ROBB

When Angus the potter called on Black Robb to deliver some clay pots he had made for him, he found Robb's savage wolfhound Campbell tied to a stake in front of the house on a 30 foot rope. Angus decided to leave the pots as close to the house as possible and set them down 45 feet from the house.

Q Not a timid man so why did he make this decision?

A The dog's stake was 15 feet from the door of the croft + 30 foot rope = 45 feet

RHYS THE RED

In a Kingdom of Powys, a man called Rhys the Red suffered a strange and terrible fate. He died on 14th October and was buried two days earlier, on 12th October, of the same year.

Q How could this happen?

A He was trapped in a small space underground by a cave-in and died two days later.

THE HEIST

A group of rough looking types spent several days in a tavern at Southampton's dock district planning and watching a particular warehouse owned by a respected wine merchant. The men waited until the small hours one morning then broke into the warehouse, overpowered the guard and left with several hundred casks of extremely expensive spirits.

Q Next morning the guard and merchant were arrested but not the men. Why?

A The men were Revenue Agents for the Crown. The merchant was smuggling spirits and the agents raided his premises to confiscate the contraband and obtain proof of his perfidy.

Rita Swift

The Dunstable Tramp Ward



Whilst going through the old Dunstable Gazettes I came across several references to the Dunstable Tramp Ward.

With no information on the internet or in any of the local history books, this appears to be a piece of local history that has been forgotten and ignored. Opened in 1864 some early details are still missing as Dunstable did not have a local paper until the following year, so although the story is on-going here is a brief history.

NO ACCOMMODATION FOR VAGRANTS

After the Dunstable Workhouse closed in 1836, any destitute person arriving in Dunstable would have been told that the nearest accommodation for vagrants was at the Luton Tramp Ward, some five miles away. After all the miles they had already walked, this was too far for many, so in desperation and knowing the consequences, they would often break a window in order to receive a night in the cells. This was followed by a court appearance and a possible five days spell at Bedford gaol.

One person aware of this plight was the Revd H B Smyth who was both a magistrate and a guardian at the Luton Workhouse. Determined to alleviate some of this suffering he persuaded his fellow guardians to build a tramp ward in Dunstable.

Land was purchased for the sum of £48 at the southern end of town to accommodate a tramp ward, and the total cost, including the buildings, came to £500. In fact, two wards were built, one for males and one for females with the superintendent's house in between.

THE TRAMP WARD OPENS

It opened in 1864 and was located near the end of Great Northern Road just before it reached High Street South. With no workhouse of our own it was governed by the guardians of the Luton Workhouse. The Dunstable Tramp Ward remained in service for 21 years. It was intended to provide a bed, for one night only, for destitute people walking from one town to another. Not all of them were indolent career beggars, many were genuinely looking for work. They would include agricultural workers, travelling tradesmen or soldiers on furlough who had spent all their travelling money and sailors going from port to a port.



OS map of 1880 showing the location of the Tramp Ward in Great Northern Road

Sometimes mechanics from the north would arrive with their families when factory work became scarce in their locality. Also, there would be women walking to join their husbands or youths with high expectations on their way to London together with disillusioned youths coming the other way. But often it was just homeless people, including children, all hoping to get a bed for the night.

One condition was that they had to be destitute; those with as little as 2 pence had to go to a lodging house.

The landlord of the Vine Public House in West Street was in the habit of receiving lodgers of the 'humble class' who preferred the comforts of an inn to a night in the tramp ward. But he operated unofficially as he couldn't get a licence because his premises were considered too small.

Dunstable, being on the main road, saw its fair share of these migrating people and the local townsfolk, although sorry for them, could not give money to everyone. The 1871 Census listed the following: a Carpenter, 3 Bricklayers Labourers, 2 Cartridge Makers, 4 Agricultural Labourers, 2 Tailors and a Seamstress.

The 1881 Census listed: 3 Labourers in Iron Foundry, a Boot Clicker, a Gold Ring Worker, a Tailor, a Tailoress, 8 Agricultural Labourers, Bricklayers Labourers, a Groom and a Sailor.

In this census the address was erroneously listed as King Street.

SUPERINTENDENTS APPOINTED

Two superintendents were appointed at the Tramp Ward, a Mr Boyce and his wife, on a wage of 4/- per week. This was later raised to 8/- per week which included a house with free gas and coal. They held this position until the ward was closed in 1885.

The wards shut at 8am each morning and opened for reception at dusk, but not earlier than 6pm (except under special circumstances). Accommodation was a bed of straw with rugs for coverlets, the windows were secured by iron bars and those at the front were painted over. Each room originally had three gas burners but this was considered extravagant and reduced to one per room. A bathroom, drying room and a sick room were also available. A stove was eventually put in the drying room, a coal fire in the sick room and a stove in the room where the men sat. Initially, this room was only heated until the first arrivals at 6pm, though this rule was later relaxed. As tramps deliberately stayed out late in order to miss having a bath the final admittance was changed to 10pm.

Food for adults was three-quarters of a pound of bread and half a pound for children with water morning and evening. Some kind people in the town actually donated tea for the inmates as the guardians refused to sanction this – claiming that it, together with fires, actually encouraged vagrancy.

WORK AT THE TRAMP WARD

In the beginning, no work was required but this was later revised so that able-bodied men were required to pick oakum (shredding old rope) and to help with the water pump. Dunstable was rather lenient with work and did not include stone-breaking for roads,

as other tramp wards or workhouses did, as it was argued that the space available was too small for breaking stones. It was also argued that it took work away from those who were employed to do this job. Women picked oakum but later were allowed to clean the wards instead as their clothes became very dirty from the oakum. Although other towns insisted on this form of payment, the toll it took on their appearance rendered them unemployable. Many would arrive at the tramp ward raggedy and scantily dressed and often without shoes. Cases are recorded of men destroying their clothing deliberately before arrival so as to receive a clean suit but it could also earn them between 7 and 14 days imprisonment, if found guilty. A sample suit was brought to the guardians for their approval which was described as 'a pair of trousers and long jacket made out of an old bag and intended for the use of the first casual who had the insolence to tear up his own clothes in the Dunstable Tramp Ward'. The wearer would undoubtedly cut a pretty figure in one of these suits, for 'they were made large enough to receive the stoutest and being of the roughest texture will admit the keen frosty air with tolerable ease at every point from top to toe'. An article in the local paper about a boy wearing such an article in court describes 'his course canvass suit more suitable for sultry weather than winter on account of the abundant crevices left for ventilation'.

HARROWING EXISTENCE

Some of the guardians appeared to want to make life as hard as possible for these people, others, together with Revd H B Smyth, fought to make life a little easier for those less fortunate. The wards were visited and inspected at various times but one visitor to the Dunstable Wards paints a harrowing picture in a letter. 'It was a piercing bitter cold night, the snow was falling fast and the keen north-easterly wind howling fiercely and drifting the freezing snow into almost every crack and crevice about any building, and then you might see 9 or 10 of our own poor fellow creatures lying upon beds of thin straw, shivering with cold, covered with this rug, having travelled many miles, and after having had to wait in the freezing snow and cold for some time to get an order from the relieving officer, were admitted into this place and fed upon 12oz of bread and some water to drink, and were lying huddled together like pigs, trying to keep each other warm and when they woke in the morning, I almost wonder that some of them should ever awake again, had 12oz more of bread and some cold water, for which they had to work and then turn out again into the killing cold to seek their fortunes, or perhaps crawl a few miles and then lie down and die'. William Slater, a vagrant shoemaker, appeared drunk and disorderly at the Dunstable Police Station because he preferred to be locked up there rather than visit the tramp ward.

MISBEHAVING AND SMOKING

There was a certain amount of misbehaviour in the men's wards, with rugs and sometimes clothing, belonging to other inhabitants, being occasionally taken or destroyed. The tramps also contrived to smoke tobacco during the night even though Mr Boyce would carefully search them upon admission. He frequently suffered much abuse when tackling this, so the committee's response was to frame a set of rules, which, if not conformed to, would result in an appearance before the borough magistrates. Very little trouble seems to have occurred in the female wards.

FAKE TRAMPS

Several books have been written by men and also two women pretending to be tramps to experience life on the road. Managing to conceal their true identities they witnessed the highs and lows of being on the road, but also experienced a certain camaraderie amongst the tramping fraternity. For some it was a way of life, eking out an existence on the road, punctuated with an occasional visit to prison.



An illustration by Eytinge of a tramp from Charles Dickens' 'The Uncommercial Traveller and Additional Christmas Stories'

A MYSTERY

Life on the road was hard and some struggled to cope. Suicide was common – one desperate man stole and drank laudanum. Little is known about him, but his hands were not those of a workman and his clothes, although they had seen better days, were of good quality. A tradesman who had lost everything perhaps – who knows?

HOW MANY WERE ON THE ROAD?

Police Superintendent George giving his report in 1877 said the total number received at Dunstable that year was 5,246 being an increase of 1,218 compared with the previous year. It was believed that many tramps were in the habit of coming round every six weeks or so during the winter because of the favourable treatment they received. Some years there was a decrease in numbers particularly if the weather was good.

THE TRAMP WARD CLOSES

By 1885 the building needed money spent on it. Mr Boyce was ill and unable to continue. The Luton Board of Guardians saw a chance to sell off the property and invest the money in Luton. Over 400 Dunstable residents held a meeting at the cross roads to protest at the closure of the wards because it considerably reduced begging in the town. Luton reacted in the same way with at least 400 people voting to keep the Dunstable Tramp Ward open as they could not accommodate any more at Luton. But it was all in vain as the Board of Guardians had made up their minds and on 30 September, 1885, the doors of the tramp ward finally closed and the property was put up for sale. Anything that could be reused was removed to the Luton workhouse. Mr Boyce remained in charge of the building as the committee feared that relic hunters would carry off bricks until there was not one left. Dunstable actually wanted the property for a fever hospital but it was sold to a Mr R Burton of Great Northern Road for £245. Mr Boyce received a superannuation allowance of 6/- a week and eventually moved to Chapel Walk to live with his daughter and son in law.

I shall continue to research the Dunstable Tramp Ward and hope to publish any discoveries in future editions of the newsletter.

Rita Swift

World War 1 and the Policemen of Bedfordshire



The causes of this catastrophic event in our recent history are widely known, if not necessarily understood, and there is no need to recount them here.

The millions of men and women from all of the nations caught up in the war, whether on the field of battle, at sea or on the home front, all have their own unique stories to tell and this was no less true of police officers from across Great Britain and the Empire.

SERVING POLICE OFFICERS RECALLED TO THE SERVICES

It was the case during the latter part of the 19th century, and for much of the 20th, that policing was an attractive career for ex-military personnel. Although the restrictions on their private lives would not have been much appreciated, the discipline was not dissimilar to that they had been used to and, from the late 19th century onwards, there was the certainty of a pension for those that stayed the course. The problem with regard to the majority of ex-servicemen at that time was that, on completion of their service with the Colours, they retained a Reserve commitment for some years after, this being determined by the conditions signed up to originally. Thus it was that in August 1914, a significantly large number of serving police officers were recalled to the Army or the Royal Navy, from Bedfordshire, as well as the rest of Great Britain. The County Constabulary in 1914 comprised just one hundred and fourteen constables plus sergeants, inspectors and superintendents.

EIGHT MEN MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

Bedfordshire Constabulary had around twenty men recalled to the Armed Forces, added to this number were many more who either volunteered or re-enlisted with the consent of the Standing Joint Committee or when the restrictions on police officers joining the Armed Forces were lifted. The total number was fifty two, a significant percentage of the Force. Eight men made the ultimate sacrifice and their names are recorded in perpetuity on the memorial now placed in the foyer at Force Headquarters.

FRANK STEVENS

Chief Constable Frank Stevens also resumed his military career. Major Stevens had been a career soldier serving with the Bedfordshire Regiment, his last posting prior to his appointment as Chief Constable being as Adjutant to the 3rd (Militia) Battalion of the Regiment. The Duke of Bedford had set up a Bedfordshire Regimental Camp at Ampthill Park as a training depot providing drafts to the front line battalions. The Duke had requested that Major Stevens be appointed as his Second in Command and, after assurances that this task would not interfere with his constabulary commitments, the consent of the Home Office and Standing Joint Committee was given. Now promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, Frank Stevens carried out these duties until the end of the war.

Only four serving officers of the Bedford Borough Police were recalled but a further thirteen enlisted, one having resigned in order to do so. Only one man paid the ultimate price but two were so seriously injured that they were both honourably discharged from the Army. Sadly the injuries sustained by both men left them unfit to return to their police duties and they were awarded pensions by the Watch Committee.

INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

Luton Borough Police had three men recalled to the Army and were required to release another to return to his previous trade for the purposes of 'Government Work'. Another thirteen men enlisted into the Army during the war making a total of seventeen. Four men resigned during the War years, one enlisting into the Army Service Corps. It is possible that the remaining three also enlisted but no records have yet been found to support this. One Luton man died during the influenza epidemic in 1919 whilst serving in Germany and another was so seriously injured that he was medically discharged from the Army. Amazingly he recovered sufficiently to rejoin the Force but sadly succumbed to his injuries in 1920 and was buried in the Luton Parish Church graveyard. A 'Roll of Honour' recording the military service of all the men from the Luton Borough Force who had served was displayed in the old Luton Police Station.

INCREASED WORKLOAD

It must also be remembered that the work of those officers who did not become members of the Armed Forces increased significantly as a result of the War. Heightened fears of espionage, anti German sentiment, increased food prices, the hitherto unknown large movements of men, resources and materials around the country and an increase in working hours (for the same pay) to

name just a few, added to the pressure on a significantly reduced workforce.

Across all three Bedfordshire Police Forces many of the more routine tasks and much of the patrolling began to be undertaken by the Special Constabulary. The Specials also undertook the protection of much of the vital infrastructure and this helped to relieve the pressure on regular officers.

Keith Jackson



This montage of Luton Borough Police officers who served during WW1 was displayed at the old Luton Police Station but when it closed in 1976 it went missing!

Greeting New Members

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

**Kathryn Ennever
Michael Furniss
Violet Marsh**

WW1 - Special Constabulary in Dunstable



Many Special Constables were employed in war work (referred to as reserved occupations in WW2) and would have worked a fifty to seventy hour week.

Nonetheless every man performed at least the minimum duty requirement (16 hours a month) some considerably more. A return of Special Constables in the Dunstable Sub-Division compiled by Inspector Walter Purser and dated the 16th December 1915 shows a strength of 103 men; the same return included the following for approval by the Chief Constable:

DUTIES PERFORMED BY SPECIAL CONSTABLES AT DUNSTABLE

1. Four Special Constables parade at the Police Station at 7pm each evening, receive their armlets and remain on duty until 10pm.
2. The Town is divided into two parts for this purpose, North and South
3. The Special Constables patrol in pairs
4. Two of the Specials patrol the North until 8.30pm then change over and patrol South until 10pm
5. The other two patrol South until 8.30pm then change over and patrol North until 10pm

6. Each pair is given two points to meet each evening, one in the South, the other in the North part of the town
7. A list of these points for the week is sent to Mr. Vernon, the Head Special Constable, to be met at his discretion and are frequently met by him. They are also met sometimes by a Sergeant or a Constable

Another interesting inclusion in the same return was a list of ten 'Special Constables sworn in Annually'. Another list gives the details of nine men who were also members of the 'Voluntary Training Corps' (properly titled the Volunteer Training Corps), effectively the equivalent of the WW2 Home Guard and made up of men too old for military service.

As was commonly the case across the country, many Special Constables were local businessmen and Dunstable was no exception. Amongst others were James Vernon (after whom Vernon Place is named), John Abel (Electrical Retailer), Harry and Arthur Bunker (Butchers), Frederick Bates (Undertaker) and Edward Franklin (Coal Merchant); the list even included the name of the Reverend W. C. Baker, Rector of the Priory Church of St. Peter.

Keith Jackson



Memories of old Dunstable

The society has been sent by Peta Whiting some war-time copies of the Dunstable Grammar School magazine which belonged to her late father, Gregson Peter Luckily.

ODD JOB MAN

As you might expect, the magazines contain much news about the boys' sporting and scholarly achievements.

But there was another side to the school, revealed in a rather endearing article in 1942 about the death of the school's odd-job man, Charles May. The magazine's editor, C.L. Harris, wrote: 'Generations of boarders will grieve for the old man who chased them so fiercely with his mop, woke them up at 5.30 in the morning with his energetic attack on the Speech Hall chairs, and cleaned their shoes to the accompaniment of fearsome grumbings. May's history was obscure, but original, and included Service overseas in the Army of years ago.'

Mr Harris wrote that 'Old May' had grumbled to him about vandalism in the school library: 'Fine books they are - torn and ripped about...'

May's 'amazing catholic reading and knowledge of the second-hand book trade were unexpected qualities' and Mr Harris remarked: 'Shame on us that he who cleaned our shoes should value more rightly than ourselves the nobility of knowledge.'

SAM KYDD

The magazines contain much news about the service during the war of Old Boys of the school. One of them, who went on to become more famous than most, was Sam Kydd who had been captured by the Germans.

The December 1943 issue records that 'S.J. (Sammy) Kydd is joint editor of Prisoner's Pie, the magazine of Stalag XXA, Germany, which is a most commendable publication. Camp activities include football and boxing. He took part in a production of Rookery Nook by the Rep Company and made a hit as Gerald Popkiss'.

Sam Kydd, perhaps as a result of that prison-camp success, became a professional actor after the war and featured in numerous films and television plays.

STREET NAMING CONUNDRUM

The society was asked to think of road names for the new development off Tavistock Street, which was land recently used for storing pallets. There were various suggestions.

Before the closure of the railway, this triangle of land was a goods yard for the Great Northern Railway which owned the line from Luton.

The yard was next to the old bridge over High Street North which connected the line to the London and North Eastern Railway, owners of the Dunstable North station and the line to Leighton Buzzard.

So, a new name could simply be Goods Yard Road. Or an Old Bridge Drive. Or The Sidings.

Or it could be Flyer Road, after the Skimspot Flyer which ran from Dunstable to Luton.

continued overleaf

Memories of old Dunstable continued



One feature of the Goods Yard was a collection of cattle pens, used to contain livestock on their way to the butchers. One of our members suggested Guernsey Way, although homely dairy cows were probably not the sort of animals kept in the pens!

Opposite the site was the old Dales Dubbin factory, run by John Dales and his daughter Lucy, Dunstable's first Lady Mayor. A suggestion was Dales View, but there is already a Dale Road (misspelled!) in Dunstable. Lucy's View might be nice.

A 1902 map of the area shows that the Cazenove Iron Works was on the site where the Tesco petrol pumps and store now stand. So Cazenove View perhaps. Sounds prestigious.

There was also Sinkwell's Iron Works on the high street corner. But perhaps Sinkwell View is not quite so upmarket. Beeching's Folly has been suggested, but only in fun...We wait agog to see what councillors decide.

THE INTERNATIONAL STORES

Sue Archer (nee Frost) has happy memories of the old International Stores (later the William Hill building in High Street South) which was featured recently in the Dunstable Gazette.

Sue moved to Dunstable in 1959 (then aged 11) to live in the flat above the store with her mother and father. The flat was very big, with a beautiful garden at the rear containing a huge copper beech tree, lots of shrubs, flowers, lawn and a large greenhouse which used to be full of grapes! The garden is now a car park.

Sue's father, Eric Frost, was Retail Director for the International Stores. He started his long career with the company as an errand boy, with a pony and trap in Norfolk. He retired around 1983.

Sue says she had many happy times living above the shop, making lots of friends from her school days at Priory School and then working at the original TSB on the Square. (Not far to go to work!). Her parents moved from the flat in 1966.

QUEEN ELEANOR STATUE

The society was asked if we have any of the original designs or drawings for the statue of Queen Eleanor which stands in the Eleanor Cross shopping centre.

The answer, alas, was no, but we would like to hear from any member who can help.

The statue was commissioned from sculptress Dora Barrett by the Dunstable building firm of Robinson and White, which created the shopping precinct.

OUT OF HOURS

We were delighted to be able to help Andrew Cartwright-Howell, of Tring, who is searching for details about his great-grandfather, Dunstable bank manager Frederick Howell.

Andrew had heard that Frederick had written a book and wondered if we had any information. Well, we actually have a rather battered copy of the volume, titled 'Out Of Office Hours', in our research room.

It was printed and published by James Tibbett at the Dunstable Borough Gazette office in March 1872 and includes a number of articles published in the Gazette, plus some essays of a very general nature. The preface is particularly jovial: 'I may safely state that if a preface is interesting and not too long I generally read it.'

In fact, the preface to some books is the most interesting part about them...I trust you will not find the following pages dull or uninteresting. My humble endeavour, I assure you, has been to make them the reverse. Can I say more? (Printer: Pray don't. Cut it short, or we shall never get it finished!).'



The cover of the Society's copy of 'Out of Office Hours'

There is nothing specifically biographical about Frederick Howell in the book's contents other than that he includes a description of his service on a jury at Bedford when he was given the opportunity to tour Bedford Gaol, which he describes in detail. He also reviews some church sermons.

A census gives his address as The Bank House, 78 High Street North, which we guess was what around what are now the Barclays or Lloyd's Bank buildings (the street numbering has since been changed).

DUNSTABLE GOODS YARD

Ex-Dunstablian Dane Hawley, of Leongatha, Australia, continues to keep in touch with the Society as he progresses with his attempts to build a scale model of the old Dunstable North railway station.

Dane, born at Aubrey Road (now Jeans Way), Dunstable, has just come back from a holiday in Tasmania where he photographed a building in Launceston, now a cafe, which is amazingly similar to one which once dominated the goods yard at Dunstable. Could it be the work of the same architect, asks Dane?



The building in Launceston, Tasmania which bears an amazing resemblance to one in the Dunstable Goods Yard

OUTLINES OF BUILDINGS IN PRIORY MEADOW

Dane has been using Google Earth on a virtual tour of his old town and is intrigued by the outlines of buildings visible from the air in Priory Meadow.

Nice to know that the geophysical work of the Manshead Archaeological Society in surveying and marking the buried walls of the old monastery is being appreciated Down Under.

John Buckledee