

The Newsletter

MAY 2006

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COVER PICTURE

Since we have now used up all the black and white photographs of Potters Bar, taken between 1969 and 1972 by Mr. Bartlett, a former Secretary of the Society, we shall run a new series of photos supplied by Terry Goulding.



This is the third in a short series of wartime photos by Frederick Cole of Barnet. The Avenue was bombed in Feb 1941. No.22 was demolished and Nos.18, 21, 23 and 24 were badly damaged. There was damage in several other streets across Potters Bar. This picture is a view from the rear garden of No.20.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

To all our Members.

At last it is starting to feel like spring might be here, after the coldest winter for 19 years, and a dry one at that! This has now brought on the hosepipe ban, probably due to the number of leaky pipes.

I then thought about the gas leak in Darkes Lane opposite Hudson Court. The smell of gas at that spot has been present for over three years and the various gas companies and their contractors have been trying to source the actual leak more intensively only over the last year, with the road and pavement under excavation about six times so far. Now it appears that the gas is in the drains under the road, and while the manhole cover was off, a kind fellow dropped it down the hole! It looks as though Three Valleys Water and the gas people have been arguing since early March about which of them is going to volunteer to go into the gas filled manhole head-first, to rescue the heavy cast iron lid, let alone seal the gas leak. Just don't strike a light as you pass or the whole road may need renovation. Do you feel that the Health and Safety Dept. at Hertsmere should show some interest?

It just reminded me of a George IV act of 17/6/1830 for 'The provision of lighting and watching of Parishes', where it specifically mentions the polluting of waterways including drains and sewers by gas. Now the fine for this is stated as £200 and £20 per day - so at 3 years x 365 x 20 = £21,900, + £200 = £22,100, if anyone wants to sue them! Oh, I do like a good argument.

Our Society meeting is on Friday the 26th of May, and is entitled 'Hertfordshire and Local Convicts, 1600 – 1870' by Mr Ken Griffin. I wonder just who he might mention - see you there.

Terry Goulding

MURIEL BRITAIN M.P.S. (President 1973-1996)

As reported in the January Newsletter, Muriel has returned to live at Ingham Lodge. Just recently, she suffered a number of small strokes and is now in Spruce ward in Barnet General Hospital. When I visited her on 10th May she was hoping to move to Potters Bar Hospital, and the nurse told me that they were just waiting for a bed before Muriel would be moved.

Brian Warren

REPORT ON THE 47TH. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held on Tuesday 25h. April 2006. Terry welcomed the members present to our 47th AGM. In his opening remarks he noted our publications were still selling well. With Mary Barnes' memories and part 5 of George Cases' life, new this year. Arnold continues to attract visitors to the museum. He thanked the stewards, and Mabel for her work at the copier. Our membership remains steady at about 170.

There were apologies for absence from Charles Dace and George Case. The acceptance of the minutes of the 46th AGM, which had been circulated, were proposed by Doreen Scivyer, seconded by Marion Baker and carried unanimously.

In the Committee's report John Scivyer noted that much had been covered in Terry's opening remarks. He noted that the talks this year concentrated heavily on Hertfordshire.

In the Treasurer's report, the income shown had increased largely due to the sale of publications, and income from the copier, giving a year-end balance of £2398.25

The election of officers and committee members as follows:

OFFICE	HOLDER	PROPOSER	SECONDER
Chairman	Terry Goulding	Arnold Davey	Brian Kolbert
Vice-chair	Arnold Davey	Terry Goulding	John Scivyer
Secretary	John Scivyer	Terry Goulding	Arnold Davey
Treasurer	Terry Goulding	Arnold Davey	Brian Kolbert
Archivist	Brian Warren	Colin Field	Mabel Hammett
Committee	Brian Kolbert	Arnold Davey	Terry Goulding
	Colin Field	Mabel Hammett	John Scivyer
	Mabel Hammett	Colin Field	Brian Warren
	Charles Dace	Mabel Hammett	Colin Field

The committee was proposed en bloc by John Donovan, seconded by Anthony Plowman and carried unanimously. The Independent Examiner (Mr. Keevil) and Trustees (Muriel Brittain, Geoff Irons and Mr. Griffith) had all agreed to carry on.

That concluded the business of the evening. After the traditional free refreshments there followed two talks; "Traditional Furniture" by Don Grammer and " The Somerset and Dorset Railway" by Anthony Plowman.

John Scivyer

OBITUARIES

BETTY OTTLEY 1921-2005

Betty and Jeff were long standing members of the Society but in recent years Betty has not been well, so they did not attend our AGMs as they always did. In the February 2006 edition of the South Mymms and Ridge Parish Paper there was quoted part of the text of the address given by the Rev'd Brenda Tipping, at the Memorial Service, on 5th January 2006. Betty was born in Plymouth and trained as a nurse at its City Hospital, later qualifying as a midwife. From 1944 she served in the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Service in India, Malaya and Burma during WW2. She met Jeff in Burma and they married in July 1950. Four years later they moved from East Finchley to Billy Lows Lane.

In 1964 Betty started nursing at the Potters Bar Hospital where she finally became Matron and retired a decade later. Her service to the Friends of the Hospital totalled over twenty-six years, of which five were as the Secretary. After all her experience in hospitals, Betty was the ideal person to write the two articles, "Potters Bar Hospital (1884-1948)" and "Potters Bar's Second Hospital (1939-1995)", which appeared in The Journals Nos.9 and 10. Perhaps they should stand as a fitting tribute to Betty's service to the community over many years. The Society sends its condolences to Jeff, their children, grand children and all members of the family.

Brian Warren

ADRIAN GIBSON (8th April 1931 - 16th February 2006)

I first listened to Adrian when he gave twenty-minute lectures at the annual Hertfordshire Archaeological Conferences, about forty years ago. His talks were full of inspiration and information; one could well see him as an excellent teacher of physics, which was his professional career.

He first spoke to the Society on, "The Mesolithic Period in the Lea Valley" (1978-79), this was followed by, "Discoveries at Harlowbury" (1985-86). His final address to the Society was in March 2004, when he provided us with an excellent lecture on, "Timber-framed buildings", by which time he had achieved a national reputation in the subject. He lived at Bishops Stortford and worked with Cecil Hewitt, who wrote the classic book, "Church Carpentry". Adrian had surveyed timber-framed buildings in Essex and Hertfordshire and was employed by English Heritage. Members might have seen him in the recent TV programme on "Hampton Court" and just before his sudden death he was examining timbers at the Tower of London. Also, he was a WEA lecturer for many years, who took classes locally in Cuffley and Goffs Oak.

As I commented in my vote of thanks to his final address to the Society, I owe all my knowledge of timber-framed buildings to Adrian. Whether he examined my notes and photographs and provided his considered opinion or made personal visits he always gave freely of his knowledge.

Like many others, especially members of the East Herts Archaeological Society, where he was President, I have lost a good friend. On behalf of the Society I express our sincere condolences to all those who knew Adrian, especially to his wife, Helen, and family.

Brian Warren

SPRING LECTURE

Friday May 26th, 2006 *Hertfordshire and Local Convicts, 1600-1870.* by Mr. Ken Griffin.

The speaker has a unique database of all the 250,000 convicts for the period 1770-1870 covering all the UK and Courts Martial which took place all over the world. This gives details of the crime, the sentence, the age of the convict, location of the trial and what happened to him or her. The talk will focus especially on convicts from this area, and he can trace your convict or victim ancestors if recorded. *CF.*

THE MEETING WILL START **PROMPTLY** AT 8PM IN THE 60 PLUS CENTRE, WYLLYOTTS CENTRE. EVERYONE WELCOME.

AUTUMN LECTURE PROGRAMME (PREVIEW)

Friday September 22nd *Admirals Walk – the history of a suburban road*, by Mr. Richard Thomas.
Tues October 10th *South Mimms Castle*, by Mr. Brian Warren.
Thurs November 30th *London before London; Prehistoric London*, by Mr. John Cotton.
Tues December 12th Our Christmas Party.

HELP REQUIRED

Stewards to help look after the Museum. If you could help just one day a month it would be of great assistance. You will be on duty with an experienced steward and you will be assured of a pleasant afternoon.

Tuesdays	2.30 - 4.30pm, contact Ian Cumming on	01707 642 296.
Wednesdays	2.30 - 4.30pm, contact Arnold Davey on	01707 654 179
Saturdays	11.00am – 1.00pm, contact Denis Lore on	01707 656 833

RECORDER GROUP

May I repeat my call for volunteers to help record all the changes that affect the appearance and daily working of the town on a weekly/monthly basis. These tend to occur most where shops change hands, but we also note road works and alterations to houses (loft extensions, etc.). Every six months we meet to collate our findings, which are then sent to *Herts. Association for Local History* where they become part of a valuable, countywide archive, for the use of future generations of historians and researchers.

It is interesting and worthwhile work, and it need not take up much of your time; if *you* would like to join our group and look after one of the areas, please phone John Scivyer (01707 657 586) for details now.
JD

MUSEUM VISITORS

Just before closing time one afternoon we received a visitor, Brian Roth, who was over on business from Dallas. It was his first trip out of the USA, and he had come to see our Zeppelin exhibits. On the previous day he had spent five hours at the Imperial War Museum, and he had also found, on the Internet, that the Potters Bar Museum had part of the L31 Zeppelin. He had set off from London on the train hoping he would get to us before we closed at 4.30pm. He rushed up from the station, arriving at 4.28pm and bought the two books on the Zeppelin and Captain Tempest, and then studied our Zeppelin display. He was very pleased when I asked if he would he like to see the site where the Zeppelin actually came down, and I took a photo of him in front of the Tempest Avenue road sign and another by Wulstan Park. We then drove down to the cemetery to see where the German crew had been first buried. Brian is interested in all Zeppelins and Airships, and I thought it was wonderful that he had taken the time to come all that way to our small museum in Potters Bar.



Imagine my amazement when the next week at about 4.00pm a couple from New Zealand arrived at the museum, *also* interested in the Zeppelin. Neil and Ann O'Callaghan had a snuff box* beautifully engraved and made from part of our Zeppelin. Norman Hill, the steward on duty, took a photo for our records. Neil's grandmother had grown up in Potters Bar and had attended a high church (which we guessed would be St Mary's); and she possibly went to Ladbrooke School. Neil's grandmother had married a New Zealand soldier in the war and had gone home with him.

The couple had flown into the UK that morning and then taken the tube to High Barnet. As they did not know how far it was to Potters Bar they took a taxi in order to get to the museum before it closed. Of course we did not close on time and, once again I offered to take them to see the site where the Zeppelin came

down. As we drove up The Walk I explained that most of the 50,000 people who came by train to see the wreck of the Zeppelin back in 1916 would have walked the muddy path to the High Street. At Tempest Avenue I took a photo of Neil and Ann on the site of the tree onto which the Zeppelin had crashed.

I then drove them to High Barnet explaining that the local reporter in 1916 was a little miffed that the Zeppelin had gone down in insignificant Potters Bar (luckily in a field). Had it landed in Barnet High Street it would have filled the street from the Church to Hadley Green and the depth of the Zeppelin would be as high as the Spires' steeples. Later, I received an email from Neil to say that his visit to Potters Bar Museum had been the highlight of his trip. A card from Brian expressed similar sentiments. *Mabel Hammett*

*If you'd like to see a photo of the box contact Mabel; the photo is too dark to copy here. *JD*

DELIVERERS REQUIRED

At the end of each issue we pay tribute to Michael Cawrey and his band of helpers, who save the Society pounds in postage by delivering your copy by hand. Naturally, our volunteers do come and go, and we now need some more deliverers. Three times per year you would be required to push a Newsletter through the letterbox of half-a-dozen or so of your neighbours' front doors. If you can help, please ring me on 01707 642 886. *JD*

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2006/2007 **ARE NOW DUE**

Adults £3, Family/Group £5

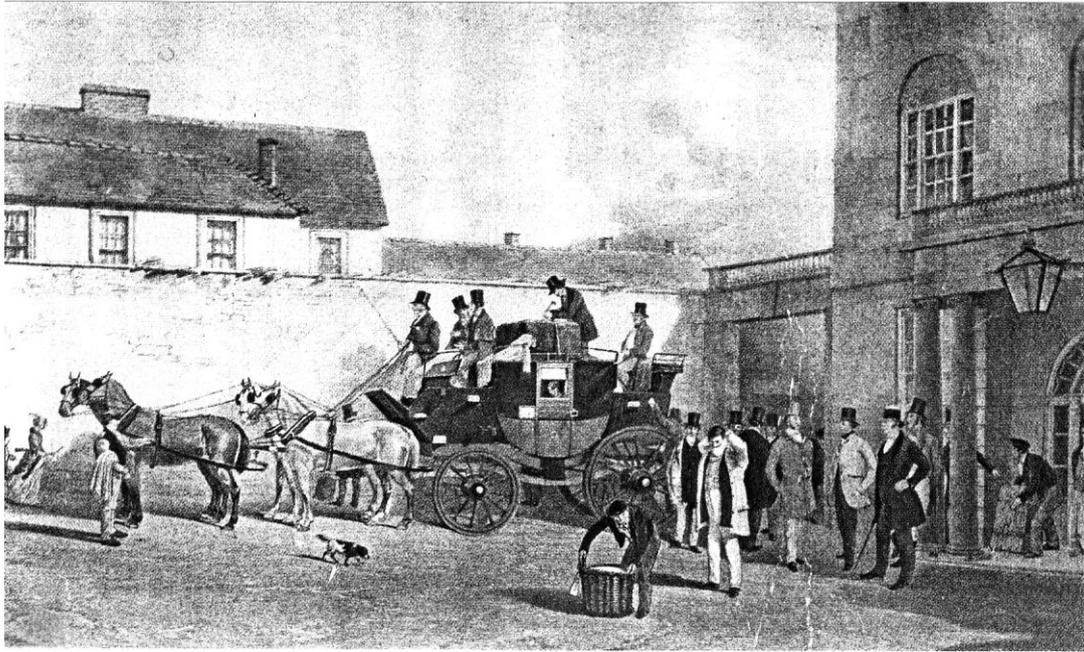
Please pay at the May meeting, or to the
Membership Secretary, Mrs. Eileen Field,
51 Highview Gardens, Potters Bar, Herts., EN6 5PN

If you do *not* intend to renew your subscription,
kindly inform the Membership Secretary (653801).

ARCHIVIST'S REPORT

I receive quite a number of requests for information during the course of a year but I thought the following might be of interest to members. The 1871 Census Return recorded Anne Selby, aged 54, as the head of her family residing at the Railway Tavern, near Potters Bar Station. Also, it noted Henry Wood and his wife from Islington, he being described as a 'gentleman'. It is possible that they were friends of Anne, as she was also born in Islington. There were two domestic servants and two cab drivers named, but none of the eight residents were born locally.

The other resident was James William Selby, her son, aged 26, the subject of this article. The following year in 1872 he is at the Railway Hotel (note the change of name) with a licence to let horses and as a coal merchant. The last reference I have located of him is in 1878, at the Railway Hotel, as a coal merchant.



Acknowledgements to 'The Cecil. Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford'.

The picture shows 'The Bedford Times' coach c.1846, and as I have been informed it later became 'The Old Times'. James Selby drove this coach from London to the Old Ship Hotel, Brighton in a record time, which still stands today. In 1988 the record time was broken but they used six coachmen. After the Windsor Horse Show, in 2005, another attempt was made but James Selby's record was achieved by him as the sole coachman and only the horses were changed.

The Railway Tavern was built to serve the needs of the passengers of the Great Northern Railway Company soon after the opening of the King's Cross to Peterborough railway in August 1850. It became the Railway Hotel in 1872. In 1938 it was re-built slightly to the south of the original building and in more recent times was known as, 'The Potters', which has recently become retirement homes. I acknowledge the assistance of Brian Stokes in the preparation this article.

Brian Warren

POTTERS BAR SOCIETY, SOCIAL EVENINGS 2006

"Due to the difficulty in finding new speakers and a successor as Social Secretary to the indefatigable Phyl Hardiment, the Potters Bar Society will in future be holding their Social Evenings on a less regular basis, with details published as and when they occur." *Alistair MacLean.*

DIARY FOR SOUTH MIMMS POST OFFICE **1874-95**

George Hollis, a member of the Society, from Sutton St.Nicholas, near Hereford, has kindly donated the above diary to the Society. It was compiled by his great aunt, Sarah Ann Hollis, who was born in Shenley on the 6th November 1837, the daughter of William Hollis (who was later to become the sub-postmaster at South Mimms), and his wife Lois. The diary was written for all of 1874 until the 17th August 1875, in which she recorded the daily weather and the state of her telegraphy operations.

I passed the diary to the weather expert, Eddie Harvey and asked him to compile a summary of Sarah Hollis's records for 1874. *BW*

JANUARY The month began with a springlike first day and heralded an average weather pattern. Though a very changeable pattern occurred it seemed to be an average month.

Rain on 9 days, Snow 2, Frost 10 and Fog 3 days.

FEBRUARY A dull start and cold up to the 12th, became cold again on 18th-21st, and again 25th-28th. A cold month with below average temperatures.

- MARCH Rain on 6 days, Snow 1, Frost 15 and Fog 3 days.
March winds upheld their reputation with stormy periods, in particular on the 7th, 10th, 21st, 29th and 30th.
- APRIL Rain on 6 days. Snow 4, Frost 8 and Fog 6 days.
The month began windy and Good Friday was stormy all day. The 20th was described as “like summer.” The 21st was hot, but there was a ground frost on the 29th. Not a bad month, with few April showers.
- MAY Rain on 5 days, Hail 1 and Frost 5 days.
A cold start, with the 9th being described as "Dreadfully cold". It became warmer 17th-22nd becoming close with thunder, lightning and hail. From the 26th the weather seemed good. Over the month presumably below average in temperature.
- JUNE Rain on 7 days, Snow 1, Thunder 1, Frost 1 and Hail 1 day.
Point to note is that there were two mornings with frost reported i.e. 13th & 14th, otherwise nothing sensational. No thunder reported.
- JULY Rain on 9 days and Frost 2 days.
A typical July, but remarkably fog was reported on the 24th, which is very rare. The clap of thunder reported on the 23rd must have been substantial enough to warrant concern over any damage caused.
- AUGUST Rain on 7 days, Thunder 4 and Fog 1 day.
An average August. I like the comment “beautifully fine” which appears periodically. Possibly the temperature was just below average.
- SEPTEMBER Rain on 5 days and Thunder 1 day.
A varied spell of weather for September, as one could feel the approach of Autumn.
- OCTOBER Rain on 8 days, Frost 1, Fog 4 and Thunder 2.
Atlantic depressions coming in October, as the month is noted for its wetness and cows are brought in. The weather was described as “beautifully bright” on the 10th.
- NOVEMBER Rain on 10 days, Frost 4, Fog 3.
A very cold, raw month. Thick fog on Guy Fawkes Day. Quote by Miss Hollis, “One could not see across the road.” It must have been pretty with the rime frost on the trees. Three inches of snow lying on the 26th. Below average temperatures assessed.
- DECEMBER Rain 5 days, Snow 3, Frost 16 and Fog 5.
Again a very cold month with below average temperatures. Snow was quoted to be “a foot deep” on the 16th. The weather was seasonal, Miss Hollis wrote on the 23rd, “Weather very severe & dangerous travelling..... than it had been for years. Freezes the ink in my pen as I write.” On Christmas Day she noted, “Ground covered with snow but thawing fast - not quite so cold” but the next day there was “snow still on ground.”
Rain on 5 days, Frost 20, Fog 2, Snow 8 and Hail 1. I would consider that hail. reported on the 19th was really snow pellets.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

1874 must have gone out like a lion. The worst weather of that year was experienced during November and December, those two months were very cold. We can cast our minds back to 1927 when Mutton Lane was blocked with snow at late December time, plus the winter of 1947, not forgetting 1963, when snow covered the ground every day in January and February, in probably the coldest winter since about 1814. Then there was the “Black Frost” of 1895, which was devastating too.

Fog was reported quite highly in 1874, on 27 separate days, this is understandable until a clean air bill was introduced in Parliament about 1952, to eliminate smog. We are now reduced to about six days annually, if that. Luckily 1874 produced no destructive gales, as did October 1987.

EXAMPLES FROM THE DIARY

OCTOBER 23rd 1874


 Weather bright - air cold - white frost
 signals good - one forwarded message
 eighteen shillings received from Postmaster Kearn
 for extra duty during Election in Feb 1874
 Weather beautifully bright all day evening moon
 stars very bright - frosty air


DECEMBER 31st 1874


 Weather very severe - with snow frost & very cold
 wind signals good one forwarded & one message
 received - S.P. forwarded ^{at 2.30 pm} to Mr Smith dinner station
 Ice fallen between Tees Hall & valley top of Pole
 broken off - no obstruction - to wires at present -
 Mr Smith visited office about 4.30 pm. Customer
 circuit in good working order - weather fine
 but dreadfully cold all day evening foggy dark &
 cold

 End of Year 1874

FINALLY

My thanks to Michael Cawrey and our team of volunteers, without whose help we should not be able to distribute the Newsletter.

The PB&DHS Newsletter is produced in September, January & May of every 'season.'

If you wish to submit an item for inclusion (preferably of a 'local-history' nature), please phone the Editor, John Donovan (01707 642 886) at least one month before the publication month (i.e. August, December or April).

Note; inclusion of such items is at the Editor's discretion.