

The Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2006

VOL. 23 No. 1

COVER PICTURE

This is the fourth of a short series of Potters Bar wartime photos taken by Frederick Cole of Barnet, supplied here by Terry Goulding.



George Case's house, No. 46 Laurel Avenue was bombed on the 26th of February 1941 and totally destroyed. Luckily, George and his mother were next door (pictured here on the right) and survived, although that house was also severely damaged (see his first book, '*My Boyhood Days in Potters Bar*' for more details).

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

To all our Members.

Hopefully, by the time you read this we will have some cooler weather to make life more comfortable. I heard a lady from English Water say on the radio that we have had a 100 year drought, and by the width of the cracks in some of the fields (up to 2 inches) I am not surprised! Then again, perhaps we should not wish for too much of a downpour in case we get it! I noticed that the Avenue is being excavated for a 1 metre diameter concrete pipe that is connected to a 5 metre x 10 metre deep flood storage tank on the golf course. The flood tank water will be pumped back to the normal surface drain after any storm.

Welcome back to a new season of lectures, which start on Friday the 22nd of September. I hope to see you all then.

Terry Goulding

NEW MEMBERS

We should like to welcome to the Society, Mr. & Mrs. Elsden and Mr. D. Abrahams. We trust they will enjoy the lectures, walks and outings that are part of our yearly programme, and we hope that they will take an active part in the life of the Society.

OBITUARY

JEFF OTTLEY 1921-2005

In the last Newsletter I wrote an obituary to Betty Ottley and just four months after her death, her husband, Jeff, died at almost the same age. Jeff was born in Ruskill, Nottinghamshire and went to Richmond School, in North Yorkshire. He then went on to study civil engineering at Leeds University and did war service with the Royal Engineers, in Burma, where he was in charge of the Gurkhas.

For much of his life he worked as a civil engineer in St.Albans and then for the Greater London Council. As Jeff was a very quiet person; it was only following his death that one discovered he had been the civil engineer in charge of the Thames Barrier.

The Society offers its condolences to Geoff and Liz and their children.

Brian Warren

WINTER LECTURE PROGRAMME

Friday, September 22nd 2006 “*Admirals Walk: The history of a suburban road*”, by Mr. R. Thomas.

A simple story of a street, from the first land records in 1450 up to modern aerial photos of the 1990s. You see the plans of the first developer, meet the first families and follow the growth of the community up to the present day.

Tuesday, October 10th 2006 “*South Mimms Castle – its history*”, by Mr Brian Warren

South Mimms Castle was in existence for such a short period of time - two years - yet its construction must have had enormous repercussions on the local inhabitants. It was only standing from 1141 to 1143, and then it was destroyed and remained undiscovered for eight hundred years, until 1918. The talk will explain the history of the castle but as Dr. Kent wrote in November 1968, ‘There is need for much much more work on the castle’ and this still applies.

Thursday, November 30th 2006 “*London before London: Pre-historic London*”, by Mr. J. Cotton.

Details to be advised later.

Tuesday, December 12th 2006 The Christmas Social. Includes refreshments and quizzes.

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

WARTIME MEMORIES

I have just read two of the “Growing up in Potters Bar” booklets and would like to submit the following:-

Although as a family we did not live in Potters Bar until 1940 my three children Jill, Pat, and Jean were brought up here. We originally came from Winchmore Hill and bought a bungalow in Sunnybank Road, at the top where building had stopped at the start of WW2. There was still plenty of green grassland then and our bungalow was just one of three. We had not been there long when my parents came up to stay, as they thought it might be quieter, and safer than where they were in Southgate. Our garden at the back finished at the start of a steep embankment, which dropped down to where the main railway line to the North went by.

One night at about 10pm, my three daughters were asleep in bed, when an air raid began. There were lots of bombs being dropped when one* exploded right opposite our bungalow, the other side of the railway, in the cemetery. All the windows were blown in. Luckily we had extra lining in our curtains so we were not hurt. Later all the neighbours came out in the street and one of them offered to let us bring our bedding over and sleep on her floor. We went back to my parent's house (luckily they had a car), and we returned to the bungalow when it had been repaired. My daughters all went to Cranborne School, and later to Parkfield school.

Catherine Carter (Kit) 21 Hertford Mews, Billy Low's Lane, Potters Bar.

* Terry Goulding wrote about this bomb in his article, *The Quiet Bang* (Journal No.1).
M.Hammett

POTTERS BAR & DIST. HISTORICAL SOCIETY: FIRST 22 LECTURES

(Number present)

Tues. 29th Sept. 1959	“South Mimms” Cranborne Library	Dr.F.Brittain Chair Mr.Sturges	64
Tues. 3rd Nov. 1959	“Potters Bar Past and Present” Ladbrooke School	Mr.G.W.Sturges Chair Mr.Gowar	25
Fri. 27th Nov. 1959	“Some Recent Archaeological Excavations in North Middx.” Cranborne Library	Dr.J.P.C.Kent Ph.D. B.A. Chair Mrs.LeGros,	25
Fri. 26th Feb. 1960	“Anglo-Saxon England” Cranborne Library	Mr.K.Rutherford Davis B.A. Chair Mr.Sturges	25
Fri. 25th Mar 1960	“Old Potters Bar” Cranborne Library	Mr.H.J.Butcher Chair Mr.Sturges	20
Fri. 17th June 1960	“Old Enfield” Cranborne Library	Miss Flint B.A, Chair Mr.Sturges	12
Fri. 25th Nov. 1960	“Recent Excavations at South Mimms Castle” Ladbrooke School	Dr.J.P.C.Kent Ph.D. B.A. Chair Mr.Gowar	20
Thur.12th Jan. 1961	“Your Family History” Potters Bar Hotel (J.Angus)	Mr.K.Rutherford Davis B.A. Chair Mr.Gowar	27
Thur. 2nd Feb.1961	“Local Government” Potters Bar Hotel	Cllr.E.T.Allen Chair Mr.Gowar	14
Thur. 9th Mar 1961	“South Mimms” Potters Bar Hotel	Mr.F.W.Gowar Chair Mr.E.Altý	14
Tues. 30th May 1961	“The Battle of Barnet” Potters Bar Hotel	Mr.F.W.Bath Chair Mr.Gowar	27
Wed. 13th Dec. 1961	P.B.’s Roads & Railways” Parkfield	Dr.J.P.C.Kent Ph.D. B.A. Chair Mr.Gowar	24

Fri. 26th Jan. 1962	“Timber Houses and their Historical Significance”		
	Mr.J.T.Smith M.A.		
Tues. 13th Feb.1962	Parkfield	Chair Mr.Gowar	16
	“Hertfordshire Place-Names”	Miss M.B.Honeybourne M.A.	
Wed. 14th Mar 1962	Parkfield	Chair Mr.Gowar	17
	“The Treatment of Historic Buildings”		
	Mr.B.T.Whincap		
Tues. 2nd Oct. 1962	Parkfield	Chair Mr.Rutherford Davis	18
	“Heraldry, Yesterday & Today”	Mr.G.C.Francis	
	Parkfield A.G.M.	Chair Mr.Gowar	14
Fri. 16th Nov.1962	“Social Life in 19th century”		Mr.M.Brilliant
	Parkfield		15
2nd or 3rd? Dec,1962	“Recent Excavations at South Mimms Castle”		Dr.J.P.C.Kent
	Parkfield		16
16 th . Jan. 1963	“The Beauty of English Churches”	Mr.L.Jones	
	Parkfield		14
12 th . Feb. 1963	“The Unconsidered River”	Mr.D.Priestley	
	Parkfield		11
14 th March 1963	“Waltham Abbey”	Mr.W.Pullen	
	Parkfield		15
8 th April 1963	“Ancient British Monuments”	Mr.Coombs	
	AGM	Chair Mr.Gowar	18

Brian Warren

MUSEUM NEWS – L31, THE POTTERS BAR ZEPPELIN

This autumn sees the 90th anniversary of the shooting down of the Zeppelin L31 by 2nd Lt. Wulstan Tempest of the Royal Flying Corps., the airship crashing in flames on the village of Potters Bar, as it then was. In its descent the Zeppelin broke in half, both halves coming to rest in the grounds of Oakmere House. There is a resurgence of interest in the First World War at present and in collaboration with GWAG (Great War Archaeological Group) and Channel 4’s Time Team it was intended to mount a dig on the site at Oakmere Park and a special exhibition in the Museum to tie in with the television programme. Well, we have done our bit and mounted the exhibition, but TV have found something else they would rather do and gone elsewhere for their WWI programme. On three occasions we have opened specially for them and no-one showed up.

However, the exhibition is up and will remain on show until after Christmas. Members are encouraged to come and see it. We have more bits of Zeppelin than anywhere outside the Imperial War Museum and we are easier to reach.

The first exhibition in 2007 will feature the Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Arnold Davey 22.8.06

Potters Bar Museum is in the Wylyotts Centre and is open from 2.30 to 4.30pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and from 11 am to 1 pm on Saturdays. Once a month, when the antiques fairs are held, it is open all day Sunday (further details from the Curator, Arnold Davey , 01707 654 179).

ARCHIVIST’S REPORT

In the space of a fortnight I had to answer two very interesting enquiries, the first one came from the Reverend Peter Bevan. A family whose deceased grandparents once lived in Potters Bar, were coming to visit their graves in Mutton Lane cemetery; could I locate the grave? I did find it and duly cleaned it up, it was to the Goss family. I also found that they lived, or members of their family did, at Nos. 23, 35 and 37, Quakers Lane. In his letter of thanks Mike Day said the only one he met

was uncle Frank Kirby. He lived at 5, The Grove and died at the age of 90, in 1984. I have found out that in 1927 he played for Potters Bar Cricket Club and so I have to send this additional information to him plus the details of the interment of his ashes in Mutton Lane cemetery.

One morning I was talking to John Parkes on the corner of Station Road and Plough Hill, Cuffley when a tall man approached us and said he was from Australia and his grandfather had lived in Cuffley, serving in the local Home Guard. Thanks to the help of Doreen Whittle within twenty-four hours we had located the family Bassett as being in the village, though not now. After less than a week we knew they had lived at 56, Theobalds Road and the following week George Bassett visited his grandparents' home and brought with him a photograph of his grandfather in the local Home Guard, exactly the same one as Doreen had given me of her father! Not only did they live near one another but served in the same unit! *BW*

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 Charles Dace on 01707 657 338

Recorder Group. Volunteers are still needed to help record the everyday changes taking place in Potters Bar, details from John Scivyer 01707 657 586.

FINGER POSTS

There are around one hundred and ten milestones surviving in Hertfordshire, and I don't suppose we in the Milestone Society shall find any more, so we are turning our attentions to cast-iron fingerposts. I had been told of one in Blanche Lane, South Mymms, and in January of this year I drove over and found it at TL 223 008. It was a non-standard, slim post, with two thin arms indicating the way to Barnet and St. Albans, and I took a couple of photographs. Ron Kingdon then gave me a photo that he'd taken of the post *back in 1960*, showing a bus passing Hamilton Close.

A few months ago I drove past the post again and you can imagine my surprise when I saw that the two arms were missing. I subsequently phoned a local resident and he had no idea what had happened to them, so one can only assume they have been stolen. If you have any news of the fate of the arms, perhaps you could let me know. *JD*



HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

On Saturday 15th July, Arnold Davey and I were on museum duty. We were just saying that business was very slow that morning, when in walked *seven* visitors. We gave them our usual greeting, "Do you live locally?" "No," they said, "we are from Mexico City", which you will agree, is pretty unusual for Potters Bar Museum.

The explanation was thus; one of the ladies in the group had spent several years studying at the Royal Vet. College, and had lived near Potters Bar. She had finished her studies and returned to

Mexico City, where she now has her own veterinary practice (she also teaches at the local university). She had come over for a graduating ceremony, and she had brought her family with her. *She* spoke fluent English, but not so the others; however, we did manage to communicate with them. The father of the lady was interested in our Zeppelin bits, and the vet was interested in all the Potters Bar displays. They stayed about half an hour, and then left us to our quiet reveries, waiting for more visitors. *JD*

THE THIRD LOCAL HISTORY FAIR at BRUCE CASTLE MUSEUM, 11th FEBRUARY 2006

While attending the above gathering I purchased a copy of Peter Brown's abridged version (46 pages) of A.J.Lynch's, "The Elementary School from Within 1870-1940". The original 241 carefully typed pages (1943) had been loaned to the author by Arnold Lynch. In the Foreword, Arnold's father described the book as, "the result is in the nature of an autobiography". He was born at Enfield Lock, on April 20th, 1872, because at the time his father was a gunmaker at the Royal Small Arms Factory. His parents lived at No.70, Government Row, later moving to Waltham New Town after his father stopped working at the Small Arms Factory.

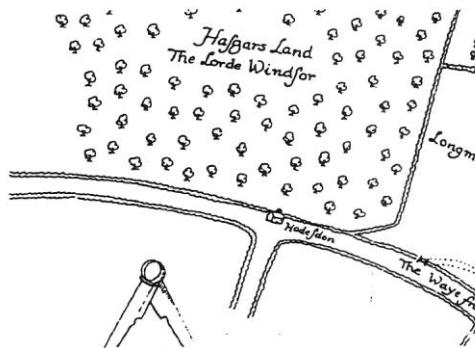
Arnold's father gave a vivid description of his schooldays and what it was like to be at school in those days. As he had a brother and two sisters teaching, it was no surprise that at about 1885 he should seek the same employment. As a 14-year-old pupil-teacher he was put in charge of fifty seven-year old children. He served four years as a pupil teacher and was paid the weekly wage of two shillings and sixpence, with annual increments to ten shillings a week in the fourth year. In January 1891 he entered Westminster Training College, off Horseferry Road. It was run by the Wesleyan Methodists.

When he married he moved to Green Lanes, where Arnold and Maurice were born. In 1919 he and his wife joined the South Tottenham Labour Party, so they began their careers in local politics, resulting in him becoming The Mayor of Tottenham, in 1940.

On p.39 I read the following, which does not require another survey to elucidate the obvious, "What the young people seemed to desire most were companionship and recreation." I found it a most fascinating booklet. *BW*

ELM COURT MUTTON LANE

The earliest known property on the site of the present Elm Court was shown on the plan of Wylyotts Manor lands dated 1594. At that time it was occupied by Hodesdon, a well-known family in South Mimms in medieval times.



By 1792 it was noted as on which formerly stood a cottage. There is no reference to Elm Court in the 1871 Census Returns but ten years later there were three buildings mentioned - Elm Court, Elm Court Cottage and Elm Court Lodge. Sarah Row, widow, was the cook in the house and

William Owen the gardener occupied the Cottage. The first recorded owner was Henry Gilling, in 1891, perhaps he was the original occupier but there is no evidence yet discovered to support the claim. The Revd. John Bell on resigning as principal of Totteridge Park School, in 1893, became the tenant and headmaster of Elm Court School. From 1896 to 1908 he was also chaplain to the Earl of Strafford, at Bentley Heath Church.

On the 28th July 1899, at the annual garden party, the academic prizes and athletic awards were distributed by the Hon. Mrs. S.Ponsonby, of Elmfield. The Census (1901) records the Revd. John Bell, his wife Maria and his sister Mary Bell at Elm Court. John Prosser and Frank Moon were tutors, while Charles Johnstone, recorded as a manager, was a visitor. There were fifteen pupils from 5 to 20, with an average age of 12.4 years. The domestic staff consisted of Cook, Laundry maid, Kitchen maids, Housemaid, Serving maid and Groom. They all came from South Africa, except the Kitchen maid who came from Granada. The Revd. John Bell died on the 15th June 1908 and his body was interred at Bells Hill Cemetery, Barnet.

In 1910 the executors of the Gilling family were still the owners but the family lived at The Elms, Hadley (destroyed in the 2WW). Eliza Gray was the occupier until 1927, when Mrs.Oldfield, later Mrs.Fraser-Oldfield became resident. According to my information it was then run as a private school for young ladies. When she died in September 1930 the property was left to the Poor Teachers' Association to be used as a convalescent home. It was not felt to be suitable for that purpose and was purchased by Albert Pinching for the Middlesex County Council, for use as a Community Centre. In early 1940 Mr, Marshall was installed as the first Warden.

While it was empty vandalism had taken place, which required a team of volunteers to replace windows, doors, etc. The caretaker, Mr.Winfield rebuilt the staircase. The Centre was just becoming very active, with about forty different organisations using the premises, when two bombs landed in the field and it required re-glazing all over again. Whist Drives and Socials were regular features of the Centre, The Cranborne Gospel Mission (later the Evangelical Free Church) commenced there, while the Society of Model Engineers had a very popular layout in the loft. The Centre was the birthplace of the local Service Units and the Elm Court Football Club was formed. It later amalgamated with Furzefield F.C. and then formed Potters Bar F.C., about 1956. The Potters Bar Allotment Association used the Old Lodge (now demolished) as a store and had a membership of over 700 in the Second World War. A group of model aeroplane enthusiasts made some superb models and so the pattern continued until the 1960s. That was the time when the Middlesex County Council thought of Potters Bar having a Youth Centre. Mr. Roy Merrin was appointed the first full-time Youth Leader in 1965 and so Elm Court became a Youth Centre. Though in 1947 there had been an organisation using Elm Court called, "The Potters Bar Youth Society".

As with most youth movements the leaders came and stayed for a short period, some of them making a greater impact than others. In their time the club flourished and was well supported. While Roy Merrin was there funds were raised towards the first phase of the re-building scheme and in 1969 a new Sports and Social Hall was opened. When Stephen Hall became Leader and stayed for three years, he and his wife opened the Club for seven days a week to the youth of the area. The name was changed to Elm Court Youth & Community Centre.

During the 1970s two shower units with eight changing rooms were built, six for weekend football and two for the Centre. Later the gym had its off-peak heating system replaced with fan-assisted heaters; as a result it was used by mums for daytime badminton,

In January 1980 David Simpson through his energetic leadership saw the Centre extend its activities to include Ice and Roller Skating; 'Attic' and Craft Sales and a programme of re-decoration. He left in December 1988. In the early 1990s, Hertfordshire County Council re-organised the Youth Service, with Youth Leaders becoming area based. As a result Elm Court lost its Youth Leader and the Voluntary Management Committee had to do more fund raising. In that time they have managed to maintain and improve the Centre with income from Car Boot Sales.

I express my gratitude to Tom Shirley for all his help in preparing this article and to Hal Partridge and George Case for their comments.

Brian Warren

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

Adults £3, Family/Group £5

Please pay at the September 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).

RED PILLAR BOXES

I can't help feeling that Britain has clubs and associations for more hobbies than anywhere else in the world; there seems to be a club for every single conceivable subject. I tend to photograph anything rare and unusual, and then decide whether I'm a *collector* or just a *recorder* (passing on the picture and information to friends). The ubiquitous red pillar-box is one such subject and, apart from a few oddities (outside Lowewood Museum in Broxbourne for example), the oldest type in use is the Queen Victoria box, of which there is an example on the wall of Osborne House at the top end of Osborne Road. Last week, acting upon information picked up at North Mymms Church's Wednesday tea and chat meeting, I located another on the wall of the Twelve Apostles Greek Church in Kentish Lane.

One design that is even more rare is the Edward VIII box; the King may have abdicated, but a few of the new boxes bearing his initials are still to be found. Examples of this type may be found in Wagon Road, Tolmers Road (Cuffley) and Chase Side (Southgate). If you'd like the sites of others, just phone me. *JD*

FINALLY

Once again I should like to thank our team of volunteers, without whose help we should not be able to distribute the Newsletter, and Michael Cawrey, who organises the volunteers.

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.