

The Newsletter

JANUARY 2007

VOL. 23 No. 2

COVER PICTURE

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



Globe House, No.44 in the Barnet Road, was badly damaged by a German high-explosive bomb, on the 25th October 1940, as was No.38. No.44 was once a beerhouse, and Mr. Dunkerley opened a cafe in here 1907, as a refreshment place for walkers and cyclists. From 1925 it became Dunkerley's newsagent and tobacconist's shop. The damaged building was temporarily repaired but finally replaced by four shops in 1956 next to the petrol station.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

To all our Members.

The committee and I hope that you had a Happy Christmas and we wish you all a Happy New Year.

As I write this note I have realised that we have had fog for almost a week and that reminded me of the real black and sooty fogs of the past. Those were on the evenings when on riding my bicycle carefully home from work in Hatfield, the car and lorry drivers were happy to follow my rear red light all the way along the Bypass – they did get confused though when I turned off homewards into Warrengate Lane. Further back in time to one evening in I believe December 1940, Cranborne School held a carol concert. When it was time to leave, a thick fog had descended, and with no street lights, the parents and children took ages to feel their way from fence to gate to hedge etc., to find the way home – great fun for the children at the time.

We welcome a new year in with our first Society meeting on Friday 26th January 2007, when Mr. Runnalls Davis will entertain us with a talk entitled ‘One Foot in the Water one Foot on the Land; the Grand Union Canal in Hertfordshire’. I hope to see you all then.

Terry Goulding

Since writing that letter, Terry has learned that he is to have an operation in Chase Farm Hospital on the 19th January 2007. We all wish him a speedy recovery. *BW*

OBITUARY

Muriel Brittain (6 January 1919 – 31 December 2006)

PRESIDENT 1973 - 1996

Muriel’s grandfather, Joseph Cunnington moved into ‘Ingham Lodge’ in 1900, three years after the house was built. In 1917 Muriel’s parents came to the House and she was born two years later; an only child. Muriel was educated at home, by two elderly ladies, Miss J.T. Griffiths and her sister, Mary C. Griffiths, who lived in South Mimms. Subsequently she attended Queen Elizabeth’s Grammar School for Girls, Barnet, later qualifying as a pharmacist. She was the Chief Pharmacist at the Westminster Children’s Hospital, at the time of her marriage, on July 25th 1959, to Dr. ‘Freddy’ Brittain. Though she was some years younger than her husband, they had known one another since childhood. Thus it was that Muriel commenced her long tenure at Jesus College, Cambridge, where ‘Freddy’ was a Fellow for thirty-two years. Muriel and her husband were devoted to St. Giles, South Mimms, until he died on the 15th March 1969. Muriel then became the assistant Keeper of the Records at Jesus until she retired quite recently.

In her tenure as President of the Society she entertained members at Jesus and on more than one occasion, held memorable socials at ‘Ingham Lodge’. Muriel always gave her generous support to the Society and using Dr. Brittain’s slides of South Mimms provided the occasional lecture.

Just a few weeks before her admittance to Potters Bar Hospital, Muriel was delighted to attend a reception, at Buckingham Palace, given by The Duke of Edinburgh, as Chancellor of Cambridge University. Muriel described it to me as, “the highlight of the year.”

Brian Warren.

NEW MEMBERS

We should like to welcome Mr. P. J. London to the Society. We trust he will enjoy the lectures, walks and outings that are part of our yearly programme, and we hope that he will take an active part in the life of the Society.

MEETING THURSDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2006

For what must have been the first time that anyone could remember the speaker did not arrive. As our Programme Organiser, Colin Field was away, I confirmed the arrangements on Monday and reported to the Committee on Tuesday. Apparently the speaker was taken ill and someone from the Museum of London had sent a text message to Colin saying that the speaker was unavailable. It was only when Colin returned that we discovered the reason for the speaker's non-attendance.

On behalf of the committee I offer our apologies to the forty-eight members and visitors who did attend.

Brian Warren.

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL, TUESDAY 12th DECEMBER 2006

Once again some thirty members were treated to a lovely evening in good company. Mabel Hammett, knowing that she would be on holiday on the day, entrusted me with the Big Bag full of catering items. She also drew a plan of the 'top table', and gave a copy to each of the ladies who were to provide the cakes, sandwiches, mini-sausages, crisps, Pringles, pickles bread, butter and salads which you can see in the photo.



On each table was a floral decoration, hand-made by Wendy Davey. Geoff Irons was in charge of the raffle and its numerous prizes, while Ian Cumming kept everyone's glass full at the drinks table.

Terry brought along items from his huge collection of intriguingly obscure artefacts, instruments and tools (mostly in wood) from yesteryear. It was our job to try to identify the objects, although Terry is quite honest about the fact that *he* doesn't know what *all* of them are either!

While the chaps helped clear the room, the ladies washed up all the glasses, cups, plates and cutlery (I kept well out of the way).

At each table, the person indicated by a secret arrow took Wendy's floral arrangement home. In conclusion Arnold thanked all who had contributed to a most successful evening. *JD*

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

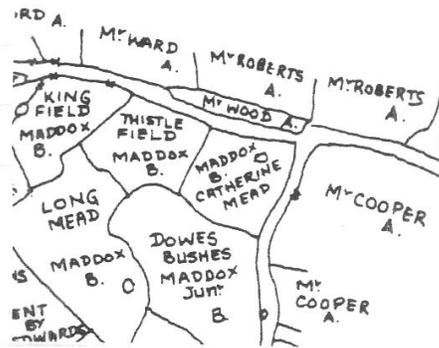
Saturdays 11.00am - 1.00pm, contact Mabel Hammett 01707 657 120

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

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE ELM COURT SITE

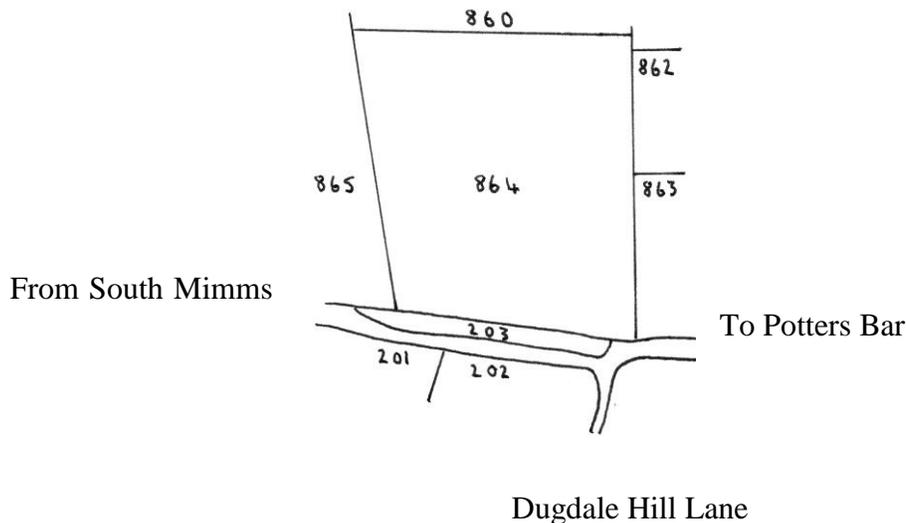
In the last Newsletter (Sept. 2006. Vol.23 No.1) I wrote, "The earliest known property on the site of the present Elm Court was shown on the plan of Wyllyotts Manor lands held in 1594." However, there is evidence that Nicholas Higgess held it, in 1567¹. In 1581² he "surrendered into the hands of the Lord two cottages with their appurtenances lying in Mimmhall Lane", one was the Elm Court site, the other a property on the South side of the Lane, possibly in the vicinity of Wroxham Gardens. Though Hodesdon was in possession in 1594³, six years later it was in the occupation of Robert Burr and his wife Alice⁴, and Robert still held it in 1615⁵.

The next reference occurs in 1647⁶ when Thomas Hughes (spelt Hewes in 1653) occupied, “my cottage in the lane leading from Willetts to Mymehall in South Mimms.” In a document dated 1664⁷ Thomas Hewes made his mark and was described as a ‘husbandman’ i.e. a farmer. By the 1730s Robert Wood was the tenant, to be followed by Joseph Wood⁸, who was the one most likely noted on the 1745 map, of the Manor of Wylyotts⁹



In 1767 Joseph Wood conveyed the property to Thomas Bliss, South Mimms, labourer. At that time it was noted, “on which formerly stood a cottage.”¹⁰ John Bliss of Potters Bar, Thomas’s eldest son, was admitted to the property and paid the annual rent of 6d (2½p), in 1792¹¹. By his Will¹² he left all his freehold and copyhold properties to his brother, Thomas, but on his decease, their sister, Catherine Ambrose, wife of John Ambrose, gardener, inherited.

TITHE AWARD MAP, 1842¹³



203 Owner Thomas Ambrose Occupier James Wanstall
Slipe meadow 3 roods 9 perches

Catherine Ambrose died in December 1847 and her husband, John in March 1852¹⁴. Their son, John, agreed with William Sears, of South Mimms, to an absolute sale for £40, he acting as a Trustee for the Marquis of Salisbury¹⁵. William Sears’ death was recorded in the Manor Court Book of 1859¹⁶.

It was approximately twenty years before Elm Court was built.

References

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. C.F.E.P. Court Roll 23/16 | 9. Guildhall Print Department V Sou (sheets 1-9) |
| 2. C.F.E.P. General 105/2 f.23 | 10. C.F.E.P. Court Book 2 p260 |
| 3. Guildhall Library Map Case 66 | 11. C.F.E.P. Court Book 3 p277 |

- | | | | |
|----|--|-----|-------------------------------|
| 4. | C.F.E.P. General 32/9 | 12. | C.F.E.P. Court Book 5, p190 |
| 5. | C.F.E.P. Accounts 113/1 | 13. | LMA TA/S. Mimms 1843 |
| 6. | C.F.E.P. Court Roll 27/13 4 th side | 14. | C.F.E.P. Court Book 5, p332-4 |
| 7. | C.F.E.P. General 106/3 | 15. | C.F.E.P. Court Book 5 p332-4 |
| 8. | C.F.E.P. Court Book 2, Index | 16. | C.F.E.P. Court Book 5 p364 |

(Mrs. H. Baker's note)

[CFEP = Cecil family papers, Hatfield House. LMA = London metropolitan Archives]

I express my gratitude to The Marquess of Salisbury for allowing me access to his archive and to Robin Harcourt-Williams, the Archivist, for his invaluable assistance at all times. Similarly, I thank the staff at The Guildhall Library, London and the London Metropolitan Archive. *Brian Warren.*

WINTER LECTURE PROGRAMME

Friday January 26th 2007 “*One Foot in the Water one Foot on the Land; the Grand Union Canal in Hertfordshire*, by Mr Runnalls Davis.

From the suburban estates on the borders of Middlesex, to the fields and meadows of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, the Grand Union Canal passes through a wide variety of scenery, including flooded quarries, noble parklands and wild life reserves. It also has features of architectural and engineering importance, and a fair share of legends and ghost stories. This talk, which is illustrated by slides, offers new perspectives on this little known and fascinating journey.

Friday, February 23rd 2007 “*Anthony Trollope his Life and Works including connections with Waltham Cross*, by Dr Graham Handley.

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) made an uncertain start as a post office clerk but rose to be an important figure in the organisation. He was responsible for many improvements as well as inventing the pillar-box. In his other career he wrote 47 novels, 42 stories and works of non-fiction, which included important travel books. Between 1859 and 1871 he lived at Waltham Cross, and while there produced some of his best work. This talk will give an overview of his life and achievements and will try to estimate the effect of the Waltham Cross years in any consideration of him.

Thursday, March 29th 2007 *The Roman Temple in Greenwich Park*, by Mr Harvey Sheldon.

Harvey was involved in the recent *Time Team* dig of this site, which sits virtually on Watling Street near where a crossing of the Thames may well have existed. He is President of three Archaeological Societies.

Tuesday, April 10th 2007 **Annual General Meeting**, followed by a short talk; *The Revolt of the Working Classes*, by Brian Kolbert.

The names Wat Tyler and Jack Straw are synonymous with thoughts of peasants and artisans in British history. However, in this instance there was to some extent, support for action against authority by representatives from the ranks of Gentlemen and ‘professionals.’ The revolt had ramifications from different areas of southern and eastern England such as Essex and Kent, Anglia and Cambridge and my talk will include general reference to the main events associated with these counties.

But, with Hertfordshire action centred on St. Albans and the movements of the rebels to and from London via Barnet and South Mimms, this aspect of the uprising will be the main feature in my presentation. *BK.*

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2007

Your subscription year runs from April 1st to March 31st, even if you join later in the session. From time to time we have members who forget to pay in April, then fall behind with their

subscriptions. It is important that you keep your receipt in a safe place, to avoid confusion. Should you pay by post, be sure to collect your receipt at the subsequent lecture meeting. If you want us to *post* the receipt to you, please enclose a SAE. You can check your current membership status by phoning the Membership Secretary, E. Field, on 01707 653 801.

Note, you should make your cheque payable to Potters Bar & Dist. Hist. Socy, and *not* Mrs. E. Field.

SOUTH MIMMS CASTLE

Introduction

Matilda granted a second charter (25th July -1st August 1141) to Geoffrey de Mandeville II, which entitled him, 'to maintain that castle which he has built upon the river Lea and to found another wheresoever he wishes on his own land'. Derek Renn suggested the castle on the Lea was probably near Bow Bridge, since all other known castles on the river were of an earlier foundation, Whilst that castle was on the eastern flank of De Mandeville's estates, it would not be unnatural to erect the other castle on the western extremity of his lands. In this case it would have been a strategic position near the Abbot of St.Albans' lands and across an early trackway. As R.H.C. Davis wrote, "What castles did was to block particular roads, crossroads or river crossings."

The castle was built but one can state it was most likely the one referred to in the charter (1141). The construction of a castle must have had an enormous repercussion on the local inhabitants. The feeding, clothing and housing of the extra workers and soldiers must have disrupted the local life of South Mimms. Following Geoffrey II's arrest at St.Albans (Michaelmas 1143) he was allowed to go free after surrendering all his lands. He set up his headquarters on an island at Ramsey Abbey, which was approached by a narrow causeway. In August 1144 he was struck on the head by an arrow and died an unabsolved excommunicant for his treatment of the monks of Ramsey Abbey. His body was refused a Christian burial, his earldom abolished, his lands and offices forfeited and his family disinherited.

The Castle - its discovery

It remained undiscovered for nearly 800 Years, until the autumn of 1918, when G.F.Cruikshank and A.F.Major, while they were investigating the course of Grimm's Dyke came upon the castle, subsequently making reports to the Earthworks Committee of the Congress of Archaeological Societies in 1919 and 1920. Nothing happened until 1931 when C.Lee Davis and his son, of the Mill Hill Historical Society, rediscovered it. An article appeared in 'The Times' in Feb.1933 and by July a South Mimms Excavation Committee had been established and an appeal was made for funds. Once again nothing resulted.

The Castle -Dr.J.Kent's excavations 1960-67

Dr.Kent, with the assistance of numerous volunteer helpers, carried out the most extensive excavations on the site so far. These were undertaken for a fortnight each year and also at weekends. The results were summarised by him in, 'The Story of Potters Bar and South Mimms', published in 1966, and the Barnet and District Local History Society's bulletin, No.15 published in November 1968. Dr.Kent's excavations were primarily concerned with the Motte, though he did extend two trenches across the Motte ditch and excavated into the western inner Bailey, where a curved wall of a pre-castle building was discovered. The extensive excavations on the Motte established the existence within it of flint footings for an almost square timber tower, which was estimated at six-foot square at a height of sixty-nine feet. It has been suggested that the tower could have been like the Navestock Parish Church tower, in Essex.

As a result of Dr.Kent's excavations a pre-castle phase is known to have existed, also the discovery of 14th century pottery indicates a later period of use.

The Castle - South Mimms to Roestock Green Motorway 1977

The construction of the motorway across the supposed Outer Bailey of the castle provided another opportunity to observe the site. A line on a 1934 aerial photograph had led to the suggestion that it was the boundary of the Outer Bailey. As a result of the 1977 observations it is now known

that the presumed boundary was of a geological origin. However, that line could have been utilised as a field boundary, so therefore the problem of whether there was an Outer Bailey is still an open question.

The most important result of the 1977 observations is that it proved the existence of human occupation much longer than had previously been known. The Castle site was used from Mesolithic times through the Belgic and Iron Age periods. Pottery dating from 1150 to 1325 was discovered, which was comparable with that found at Northolt.

This is not the end of the South Mimms Castle saga but only another brief phase of enlightenment in uncovering the mysteries of the past. As Dr.Kent wrote in 1968, "There is need for much more work on the castle. Virtually nothing is yet known of the Bailey, its buildings or defences, and the pre-castle phase of the site requires further elucidation."

© Brian Warren, December 2006

THE GUILDHALL LIBRARY, LONDON

'LONDON APPRENTICES' (from South Mimms and Hadley).

I express my thanks to the author, Clifford Webb and The Society of Genealogists, as there are now 44 published books.

In the following extracts to local people, the person on the left was apprenticed to the London master on the right.

VOLUME 39 TALLOW CHANDLERS' COMPANY 1633-1800

18-11-1658	Jn Beacham son of Thos. Hadley	husbandman	to Nicholas Farrant
17-10-1637	Bernard Blocke son of Edw. Hadley	husbandman	to Robert Asplin
4-12-1660	Wm.Hudson son of Wm. Hadley	plumber	to Nicholas Farrant
3- 2-1666/7	Rbt.Peck son of Rbt. Hadley	yeoman	to Jn.Yarling
8- 4-1658	Thos.Pierson son of Thos. Hadley	husbandman	to Rbt. Aspley
9- 7-1695	Daniel Simmonds son of Thos. Hadley	carpenter	to Jas.Parrot
31- 5-1659	Thos.Dancer son of Thos. SMs	husbandman	to Thos. Pratt
15- 5-1683	Thos. Garrett son of Jn. SMs	victualler	to Samuel James
10- 5-1665	Jn.Hightor son of Jn. SMs	gentleman	to Jas.Holworthy
1- 8-1709	Wm.Roberts son of Jn. SMs	yeoman	to Matthew Woodward
2-10-1711	Hy. Tickford son of Jn. SMs	yeoman	to William White
2- 7-1660	Jn.Trott son of Rbt. SMs	victualler	to Anthony Bun
7-11-1698	Jn.Parry son of Edw. Mimms	innholder	to Thos.Woolhead

VOLUME 40 PEWTERERS' COMPANY 1611-1800

14-3-1694/5	David Brookes son of Thos SMs	yeoman	to Abigail Ummont
	[11-8- 1698 mistress turned over to Joseph Smith]		
22- 6-1704	Jn.Day son of Jn. SMs	carpenter	to Joseph. Westwood
19- 2-1626/7	Richd.Marshall son of Chris.SM	yeoman	to Daniel. Coles
16- 7-1613	Robt.Royston son of Ambrose SMs	pewterer	to Jn.Cowdwell
18- 8-1692	Edw.Ellis son of Edw. Hadley	shoemaker	to Thos.Mayes

BW

RED PILLAR BOXES

Following my article in the last newsletter, John Scivyer told me of a Victorian letterbox he'd seen 15 years earlier, on the wall of the school at Birch Green. What is more, it had been painted green. I drove over there some time afterwards and was pleased to see it still there, and still green.

JD.

MOUNT GRACE CENSUS RETURNS

This is the concluding part of the article in the January 2006 Newsletter

<u>1871</u>			<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Where born</u>
Grace Eliz th Fenton	Head	widow	54	no occupation	
Annie Grace Fenton	daur	unm	25	do.	Paris British Subject
Eva Katherine Fenton	daur	unm	18	do.	St.John Parish London
Rose Margaret Fenton	daur		15	do.	do. do.

1881

Occupier John Currie but not at home at the Census.

Mount Grace

William Bunce	Head	mar	39	Gardener	Middlesex South Mimms
Ellen Bunce	wife	mar	39		Middlesex Hackney
Esther Bunce	dau		10	Scholar	Middlesex Holloway
Rose Ellen Bunce	dau		9	Scholar	Middlesex Holloway
Henry Hogg	Head	mar	25	Gardener	Bucks Winslow
Annie Maria Hogg	wife	mar	21		Middlesex Hornsey

1891

Mount Grace

Henry Parker	Head	mar	44	Gardener	
				Domestic servant.	Surrey Ewell
Eleanor Parker	wife	mar	43		Worcs. ?

1901

MOUNT GRACE

Walter J.Mappin	Head	mar	32	Gold Manufacturing Silversmith	Tunbridge Wells
Mildred H. “	wife	mar	25		Berkhampstead Herts
Walter G. “	son		2		London
John R. “	son		8 months		Potters Bar
Jane Hammond	servant		34	Cook Domestic	Holloway
Clara Lloyd	“		25	Housemaid Domestic	Stafford Staffs
Mabel A. Elise?	“		17	Underhousemaid	London
Louise Beardwell	“		20	Undernurse	Southampton
Lilly Mason?	“		29	Nurse	Elgin Scotland
One [Bridget Jepham? person [Cassandra Dales	“		35	Parlourmaid	Burton on Trent

1910 Lloyd George’s “Domesday” Valuation

Owner and Occupier James Forbes, house, stables, grounds, agricultural land of 14 acres, 1 rood, 38 perches.

© *Brian Warren.*

THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD ROAD

If you leave Northaw heading north via Vineyards Road, there is a bridge over the stream in the valley. Built into the eastern wall of that bridge is a milestone, “17 miles from London”. In the opposite wall is another stone, quite illegible now, but once showing, “8 miles to Hertford”. Those milestones have long intrigued me, since Vineyards Road could hardly have been a turnpike.

Brian Warren then told me of a book he'd been reading (*History of Hertfordshire*, by N. Salmon, 1728), which traced the route of a road from London to Great Yarmouth. It went through Newington and Green Lanes, Southgate, over the Chase, Cattlegate, across Northaw Common, Newgate Street, Little Berkhamsted, Hertford, Wadesmill, Braughing, Barkway and on to Great Yarmouth. If the road had passed through Northaw to Newgate Street, it must have passed along Vineyards Road. I had been told that there was once a milestone on Carbone Hill, by Postern Bridge (a mile north of the 17th stone).

I decided to follow that Great Yarmouth Road from Northaw, checking my mileage as I passed the 17th stone, and noting where each consecutive milestone would have stood. The site of the 18th marker was indeed at Postern Bridge, the 19th at Newgate Street (by Tyler's Causeway), the 20th at Little Berkhamsted near Bucks Alley, and the 21st at the foot of Robins Nest Hill on the Lower Hatfield Road – almost opposite the old river-crossing at Water Hall Farm! The latter is now next to a huge (private) gravel works, so my search for milestone sites had to stop there.

Now, did the road to Yarmouth then go through Hertford via the Lower Hatfield Road, or did it cross the river at Water Hall (note, St. Mary's Lane and its river crossing wasn't put in until 1801) and follow the old track that led up the hill and through Hertingfordbury? The road from Bengeo (Hertford) leads to Wadesmill, and then on to the Braughing and Barkway Road, which was once the primary route to Cambridge. Of course, there are milestones along *that* road but they were placed by people at Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

To add to the mystery, Colin Woodward of The Milestone Society sent me a copy of a map that shows a figure 8 on Kentish Lane, just by the old junction with the Great North Road and Shepherd's Way. I drove from the current junction to Hertford and I covered about 8 miles. Was that figure 8 a milestone? There's nothing there now.

So, we *can* trace a possible course for Brian's road, from Vineyards Road to Braughing, Barkway and Cambridge (thence to Yarmouth), but why are there no surviving local milestones? Can anyone throw any light on the mystery?

MUSEUM - FIRE SAFETY

On October 1st 2006 new safety laws came into force, which affect the Museum, since it is open to the public. Arnold Davey has attended a fire-fighting course, as a result of which he has re-written the instructions in the Stewards' Handbook. Would all members of the Society who are also Stewards please read this section of the Handbook when they are next on duty.

FINALLY

Thanks go to Mabel Hammett for photocopying the Newsletter, our team of volunteers (without whose help we should not be able to distribute it), 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.**

**POTTERS BAR AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

General Secretary, John Scivyer 9 Hill Rise, Potters Bar, EN6 2RX

The 48th Annual General Meeting will be held in the 60+ centre at 8.00 p.m.
on Tuesday April 10th 2007

Agenda

- 1) Chairman's opening remarks
- 2) Apologies for absence
- 3) Minutes of the 47th A.G.M. and Matters Arising
- 4) Secretary's Report
- 5) Treasurer's report and accounts
- 6) Election of officers and six committee members. These are:-
 - a) Chairman
 - b) Vice Chairman
 - c) General Secretary
 - d) Treasurer
 - e) Archivist
 - f) Six committee members

Please use the attached form to nominate candidates. This must be returned to the General Secretary (address above) **no later than 27th March 2007.**

- 7) Appointment of an independent examiner.
- 8) Appointment of trustees
- 9) Any Other Business – items must be sent to the General Secretary (address above) **no later than 3rd April 2007.**

NOMINATION FORM

I propose (print name).....

For the Office of

Proposer.....

Seconder.....

Candidate's signature.....

After the Business there will be a short talk on "The Revolt of the Workers." by Brian Kolbert

THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD ROAD

If you leave Northaw heading north via Vineyards Road, there is a bridge over the stream in the valley. Built into the eastern wall of that bridge is a milestone, “17 miles from London”. In the opposite wall is another stone, quite illegible now, but once showing, “8 miles to Hertford”. Those milestones have long intrigued me, since Vineyards Road could hardly have been a turnpike.

Brian Warren then told me of a book he’d been reading (*History of Hertfordshire*, by N. Salmon, 1728), which traced the route of a road from London to Great Yarmouth. It went through Newington and Green Lanes, Southgate, over the Chase, Cattlegate, across Northaw Common, Newgate Street, Little Berkhamsted, Hertford, Wadesmill, Braughing, Barkway and on to Great Yarmouth. If the road had passed through Northaw to Newgate Street, it must have passed along Vineyards Road. I had been told that there was once a milestone on Carbone Hill, by Postern Bridge (a mile north of the 17th stone).

I decided to follow that Great Yarmouth Road from Northaw, checking my mileage as I passed the 17th stone, and noting where each consecutive milestone would have stood. The site of the 18th marker was indeed at Postern Bridge, the 19th at Newgate Street (by Tyler’s Causeway), the 20th at Little Berkhamsted near Bucks Alley, and the 21st at the foot of Robins Nest Hill on the Lower Hatfield Road – almost opposite the old river-crossing at Water Hall Farm! The latter is now next to a huge (private) gravel works, so my search for milestone sites had to stop there.

Now, did the road to Yarmouth then go through Hertford via the Lower Hatfield Road, or did it cross the river at Water Hall (note, St. Mary’s Lane and its river crossing wasn’t put in until 1801) and follow the old track that led up the hill and through Hertingfordbury? The road from Bengeo (Hertford) leads to Wadesmill, and then on to the Braughing and Barkway Road, which was once the primary route to Cambridge. Of course, there are milestones along *that* road but they were placed by people at Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

To add to the mystery, Colin Woodward of *The Milestone Society* sent me a copy of a map that shows a figure 8 on Kentish Lane, just by the old junction with the Great North Road and Shepherd’s Way. I drove from the current junction to Hertford and I covered about 8 miles. Was that figure 8 a milestone? There’s nothing there now.

So, we *can* trace a possible course for Brian’s road, from Vineyards Road to Braughing, Barkway and Cambridge (thence to Yarmouth), but why are there no surviving local milestones? Can anyone throw any light on the mystery?