

# S.A.L.H.S

website: [www.salhs.org.uk](http://www.salhs.org.uk)

*Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society*

**Issue 11**

**Editor—Terry Collins**

**July 2014**

## On The River

Our May evening gave us two speakers with similar themes to talk about. To begin with David Batley spoke about the organisation he is involved with, Canalability. Founded 25 years ago the aim of Canalability is to provide access to the rivers Lee and Stort using boats available to all whatever form of disability they have. It was used originally for young people on YTS schemes using a boat called the Rose of Essex. The three boats that the organisation now have sail from Harlow and can go as far as Bishops Stortford, Hertford or even London, and can be used for day trips or holidays. The vessels being used at the moment are the Stort Challenger and Stort Daybreak which are both day boats and the Red Watch which is used for longer trips.

The boat Red Watch, (below) has a very unusual tale attached to it, fire-fighters from Leytonstone were collecting in the streets, when they were asked by an American woman what they were collecting for, on being told she said that it was a great thing to do. A week later they received a donation of £100,000



from her.

David explained that it was possible to travel from Bishop Stortford to London and go to either Limehouse Basin or even Little Venice via London Zoo and Camden Lock in a matter of four to five days, a very pleasant short holiday.

Various groups of people use the boats, including disabled children and adults, elderly groups, Help for Heroes, young offenders and even a quiz team, and locally virtually all the children from Amwell View school have been on one of their trips.

Our second speaker was lifetime local resident Richard Atkins, and his subject was the sailing barges which regularly plied their trade between London and Hertford/Ware, and the Thames Estuary. When these barges were in their heyday there were between three and five thousand of them most of them carrying the wonderfully named London mixture, in other words horse manure, used in the making of bricks. The vessels varied in size with the smallest carrying about 15 tones of cargo while the largest carried 450 tons. It could be a profitable business as one bargeman, Henry Dodds became a millionaire. In 1863 he gave a prize of £100 to the winner of a race between barges, a lot of money at the time, and the races have been going on ever since, 2013 being their 150th anniversary.

Some of the smaller vessels, because of their shallow draught and narrow width are able to sail up the



Sailing Barge 'Kitty'

river Lee as far as Hertford. Being flat bottomed enabled the vessels to sail almost anywhere and beach themselves on mudflats, where wooden shovels used by the crew loaded the cargo. The shovels could take almost half a hundredweight each time it was used, and 80 tons was the average cargo weight. Sand collected from Maplin sands was mixed with the mud to make bricks.

Two of the more notable of the barges was the Kitty, which carried cargoes of stone from Portland to build the new Dover harbour. The Edith May helped to lay the PLUTO (Pipeline Under The Ocean) pipe which Allied forces used during the D Day landings. Richard then told us that his own vessel had only recently been broken up and that the last barge to carry cargo was in 1979.

Both David and Richard were warmly thanked by Chairman Ian White for their amusing and interesting presentations.

# Magna Carta

## The Foundation for Freedom 1215 - 2015

Our Chairman Ian White, began the June meeting, with a surprise announcement, that the talk he was giving was on the history of the World Cup, after one or two slides showing the results of England's campaigns against France, (England won in 1815 10-0, 1715 4-0 and 1415 20-0) All years ending in 15 as the real subject of the evening, Magna Carta, was signed in 1215.

He began with a quote from Lord Denning, Master of the Rolls, who called it "the greatest constitutional document of all time - the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot." He then asked the question, Was Denning right, has Magna Carta made any difference to people's lives then or now?

Ian reminded the audience that this was just 150 years after the Norman invasion and that at this time in our history the rule of the monarch was absolute, there was no system of government where power was balanced, there was constant warfare, and privilege was the natural order of things.

King John was ruler at the time of Magna Carta having succeeded to the throne after the death of his brother Richard I. There was another claimant to the throne however, Arthur of Brittany, son of John's deceased elder brother Geoffrey. John was crowned in 1199, but Arthur supported by Louis VII of France claimed much of the English territory in France. This led to five years of war between John and Arthur, during this time John spent much of his time in France losing most of England's territory. It is rumoured that Arthur was murdered by John

and his body thrown into the river at Rouen in 1204.

John's reign has long been considered one of the worst in English history, during his time on the throne he managed to achieve the following:

- \* Raising taxes to breaking point, he was richer than any previous king.
- \* Abused the court system to provide himself with bribes and fines.
- \* Seized lands to control inheritance of heirs and heiresses.
- \* Demanded knights payments at a level not previously known.
- \* Accused of sleeping with the wives and daughters of barons.
- \* Enforced collection of debts.



King John signing Magna Carta

He was described in Stubbs Constitutional History as 'The very worst of all our kings....a faithless son....a treacherous brother....polluted with every crime....false to every obligation....in the whole view there is no redeeming trait.'

In July 1205 the Archbishop of Canterbury died and Pope Innocent III appointed Cardinal Stephen Langton., John declared that his rights had been infringed and he refused to admit Langton, the Pope issued an in-

terdict, and all churches in England were closed and no marriages, funerals or baptisms took place. The final straw occurred when John seized all church property and money.

By Christmas 1214 John was facing a virtual uprising from the leading Barons of the country including Richard de Clare who held the Lordship of Stanstead Abbots, who was a leading figure in the Baron's cause. Many of the Barons came from the North and East of the Kingdom, they had no stake in the French wars and hated the King's court.

There had already been a failed assassination attempt on the king's life in 1212 and in 1213 John had to cancel his expedition to France as the Barons would not support him, but in May 1215 the Barons met at Northampton to renounce their support for the King and elected Robert Fitz Walter as their leader, they marched on London and also took Lincoln and Exeter. Archbishop Langton was sent to organise talks with the rebels and finally on 15th June 1215 the rebel Barons met the King at Runnymede.. If the primary function of a medieval monarch was to give good law and justice to his people then King John had failed miserably.

Now that King John had signed the charter, what happened next?. Not as much as you may think, the king refused to accept and abide by the terms of the charter, Robert Fitz Walter and the other Barons rebelled backed by King Louis of France. A French army invaded England in 1216 and marched into London and Louis claimed the crown. However the following year at the siege of Rochester castle the revolt collapsed and the French were defeated. King John also died to be succeeded by Henry III. These events became known as *Continued on Page 3*



## Magna Carta

*Continued from Page 2*  
The Barons War 1215 -1217.

What did the people of England get from the Magna Carta? That depended on who you were, there were a number of 'rights' listed in the charter but the number of rights you got varied depending on where in the social hierarchy you stood. Earls and Barons received 12 rights, Knights 11 rights, free men 4 rights. Merchants 3 while the lower clergy and the villeins just one right. Effectively this meant that 75% of the population were still left in the hands of the nobles. The Church had freedom to appoint its own Bishops, it protected the privileges of cities and boroughs, gave more power to the Knights and protected the interests of the nobility. But even then the charter got a mixed reaction, the Pope rejected it, the King claimed it was an



intrusion into the traditional rights of the Crown, the Barons claimed it as a statement of the law of the realm, others thought it an attempt to secure feudal privileges of the nobility. It does however mark the beginnings of Parliamentary democ-

racy as governmental power would now be exercised according to principle custom and law, there would be no taxation without representation and it was a statement of individual liberties. The historian J.C. Holt stated that the 1215 Magna Carta was a failure, as it was intended to bring peace but in fact it led to war, it pretended to state law but provoked disagreement, its terms were never properly executed and it only lasted for three months. It was reissued

three times in 1216, 1217 and 1225 and the last version became law. Nine of its chapters still remain in the English statute book and no other legal enactment has lasted so long.

Lord Woolf has described Magna Carta as 'the first of a series of documents that are now recognised as having a special constitutional status' and has also stated that 'Magna Carta has played the most critical role in developing our role of democratic government subject to the rule of law' Since it was first signed it has been reissued 4 times, confirmed by parliament on almost 50 occasions and the UN Declaration of human rights is a direct descendant.

There are 4 copies of Magna Carta, 2 in the British Library, one in Salisbury and one in Lincoln, and next year the four will come together for the first time in 800 years and will be on show at the British Library from 13th March through to 1st September.

Ian answered questions from the audience and was then thanked by Vice Chairman Bob Hunt for a most interesting and amusing educational evening which the audience thoroughly enjoyed.

### SALHS walk and talk tour of the High Street.

The SALHS added another string to its bow on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June when the first walk and talk tour of the High Street took place. At 7.15 pm 29 members of the Ware Society could be seen beginning to congregate in the village car park. They had come to enjoy a specially arranged talk on the village and the High Street given by Ray Dixon the SALHS archivist and historian. This took the form of a walk and talk up and down the

High Street, stopping at suitable locations to point out relevant buildings and features linked to the broader history of the village. The talk included many points of interest interspersed with little stories of village life which added a sense of fun and amusement to proceedings. The evening went all too quickly finishing near the mill in Roydon Road not that long before sunset. Following a few questions about the details of the Clock House a representative of the

Ware Society warmly thanked Mr Dixon for an interesting and informative evening which they had thoroughly enjoyed. While the majority headed to the car park and home, some participant lingered on to talk in more depth to the speaker about matters that had taken their interest earlier in the evening. It is to be hoped that Ray Dixon can be prevailed upon to continue this very successful start to a new society venture.

**Report by Stuart Moye**

Sue Garside was our July speaker with her presentation on our local landmark, Rye House. She began by explaining that there were a number of places called by that name, the original gate house, the inn and a farm, add to that two places called Rye Park and it can all get rather confusing.

However sticking to the original gate house we need to go back as far as the Domesday Book where the manor of Rye comprised a 60 acre estate and manor house and its income came from harvesting eels from the river Lea. The name derives from the old English - aet pa-creie,

The first owner of Rye House that is known was Andrew Ogard, of Danish descent, born around 1400, he fought with Henry V in France during the 100 Years Wars, and as a result became quite wealthy, and he bought the manor of Rye in 1443. By this time draining the rivers had increased the size of the holding to 150 acres. When he had bought the manor house he set about installing the first Rye Park.

As owner of the land Ogard was responsible for the upkeep of the bridge over the River Lea and for collecting the tolls for the road adjoining the manor. He was also entitled to defend his property by including battlements, etc in the building.

The house is built of mainly local red brick set in English bond, This would have been a very expensive house to construct as there were about 50 different types of brick used in its construction. It is one of the earliest brick buildings in Hertfordshire. In the front of the building on the first floor there are two large oriel windows, and the front door surround are in white limestone and above the door there was once the Ogard coat of arms. There was a drawbridge operated

by chains which went through holes in the wall either side of the door, inside the building there was a lever mechanism which operated the bridge. A brick staircase at the rear of the building led to the first floor and in that room was a large fireplace which led to a twisted chimney, the oldest in Hertfordshire.

The Ogard family held the manor until the 16th Century when it passed to Sir Thomas Parr, and on his death in 1517 it passed to his wife Maud who kept it as her main dwelling. Her eldest daughter Catherine married three times, the final one as the sixth and last wife of Henry VIII.. In about 1570 the manor passed into the hands of William Frankland, his wife was Joyce Trappes a wealthy woman, from her first marriage, there is a brass of her son James in the floor of St James church. She donated money to both Oxford and Cambridge universities. The manor was in the hands of the Frankland family until the early part of the 17th Cen-



Rye House Gate House Today

ture. In 1619 the manor was sold to the Baesh family who later sold it to Edmund Fielde in 1676. Edmund Fielde was the M.P. for Hertford. In 1863 Rye House was occupied by Richard Rumbold a retired maltster. Rumbold had been a colonel in Cromwell's army and had been one of the guards around the scaffold when Charles I was executed. When

Charles II took the throne there was a lot of ill feeling among some members of the Whig party due to the Kings sympathy for Catholicism, as the Kings brother James had converted to that faith. A plot to assassinate them both had been hatched in London. The King and his brother were staying in Newmarket for the races and their route home would take them past Rye House and the plotters were going to attempt to kill them as they passed the narrowest part of the road. A cart was to be overturned in front of the Royal coach and the plotters would then come out and shoot both the royal brothers. However there had been a large fire at Newmarket and the King changed his travel plans and left early and passed Rye House a few days earlier than expected. One of the conspirators, Joseph Keeling confessed and when the news reached the King he was pardoned, others were not so lucky and were arrested. Rumbold fled to Holland, where he joined with others planning to kill the new King, James II, who had succeeded to the throne on the death of Charles II in 1685. The rebels invaded Scotland but were defeated. Rumbold was wounded and captured, taken to Edinburgh and executed. Thus ended the Rye House plot.

The Fielde family retained the house for over a century until the 19th Century when the estate was broken up after Miss Fielde married. The Gatehouse had been used from the 17th century as the parish workhouse for Stanstead Abbots accommodating 50 people. By the early 19th century the Rye House had become something of a romantic ruin and it was the subject of a number of paintings from noted artists of the times, including Turner. The last member of the Fielde family to own the house was Sophia, but

*Continued on page 5*

she partly sold it to William Henry Teale and he leased more of the local area in 1864, including the inn, then named The Kings Arms, in total about 50 acres.

Teale saw potential for tourists due to the history of the house and the river's popularity with fishermen, dating from the time of Isaak Walton. With the coming of the railway in the 1840's, Teale made arrangements with the railway company for them the stop if a train was flagged down by potential passengers as they approached Rye House. He even went so far as to send members of his family up and down the line to prove that there would be a sufficient number of travellers to make it beneficial to create a station there.

Teale filled the rooms of the house with paintings and furniture after converting the old malt house into a bar and tearoom. In 1869 he bought the Great Bed of Ware for 100 guineas from the Saracens Head in Ware and installed it in Rye House. He bought the old inn and changed it's name to the Rye House Tavern. He hired a guide to show people around the house and tell the story of it's history. In the grounds he added ornamental gardens, a maze and a bowling green. Day-trippers from London soon began to flock to the site by train

and coach. Teale constructed additional buildings to enable an even larger number of people to be catered for, the banqueting halls could cater for between one and two thousand people.

He advertised the "pleasure gardens" birthday parties, banquets and 'van' parties. He made changes to the Inn and fitted it with ornate metal window frames purchased from a house in Cheshunt in 1870.

By the end of the 19th century



Banqueting Room at Rye House

Teale's pleasure gardens had become so popular that a dance had been written for it, called the Rye House Polka. At weekends and bank holidays thousands came, mostly from London, to visit the house and take a pleasant day in the country away from the bustle of the city. Special trains were run from London just to accommodate the numbers wishing to visit. At one weekend

twenty five thousand visitors were recorded

William Teale died in 1876 but his family continued to run the site until 1904 when it was sold to Christies Brewers, from Hoddesdon, who also bought the Great Bed of Ware. From then on the number of visitors to the house declined somewhat, and soon after the end of the First World War they gatehouse caught fire and was badly damaged, two boys were charged with arson but were never sent to trial. The building deteriorated even further until restoration work began in the 1930's and was later completed by the current owner Lea Valley Regional Park in 1971.

Brickwork was re-built, a new roof was added and the moat re-dug, to give the impression of a moated castle. On opening days the gatehouse is manned with an information desk and the staircase now leads to a rooftop viewing platform and a close-up of the 15th century barley twist chimney. The nearby pub, the RSPB Nature Reserve and the Rye House Stadium with its speedway and go karting still makes it an attractive venue.

Sue was given a well earned round of applause from an appreciative audience, answered a number of questions and was warmly thanked by the chairman for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

??? QUIZ NIGHT ???

Friday 10th October 2014

Parish Hall, Roydon Road. 7.30pm

Tickets available at September Meeting

or

Contact Terry/Glenis Collins

Tel 01920 420084

ADMISSION £5 including nibbles, tea and coffee

Bring your own food and drinks.

Maximum 8 per table

#### From the Editor

For those of you attending the BBQ on August 10th, please remember that the admission is £5. Also please bring your own drinks and if some could also bring chairs, that would be appreciated. Remember too that the venue is Bachelors Hall, High Street (Many thanks to John and Rowan Lloyd).

I am also looking for articles to put into the newsletter, if you want to contribute anything relevant, please contact me or send me the article (however large or small) and I shall try to include it.



## SALHS AGM 2014

The second SALHS AGM took place on 9th May to an audience of enthusiastic members. Chairman Ian White compared our first two years against two or three similar societies which had been in existence for longer, he had looked at those in St Neots, Hebden Bridge and Bromyard, and we stand comparison very well with them. They all have monthly meetings, social events and visits to places of local interest. All of which we too can claim to include in our programme. Ian looked back at some of our achievements during the past year, we have had Ron Dale's book on the history of Stanstead Abbots published successfully, and so far it has sold over 270 copies, Ron will also be receiving an award from the British Association for Local History for his contribution to local history.

Our online archive is continuing to grow and develop week by week, it is becoming a very valuable resource. We also have an archive of printed material, maps, documents and photographs. We

### Data Protection Act

In accordance with the above act we have to advise that the Society holds information on computer in respect of each member. This information is used for routine membership purposes only and remains confidential.

### Forthcoming events

August 10th BBQ **Members only FULLY BOOKED**

September Friday 12th 200 Years of Much Hadham Forge by Robin Webb

October Friday 10th Quiz Night, Tickets available in September See Page 5 for details.

November Friday 14th In Memoriam by Terry Collins

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm  
Members Free. Non Members £2 Tea, Coffee and biscuits included

are still looking for a permanent base for this and we would like to be able to have it available for members and the public in general to view if suitable premises can be found.

We have our quarterly newsletter, keeping members up to date with news of events and reports on meetings. A small group of members did some work on the history of the High Street, and this being the centenary of the First World War and two are working on the lives of those commemorated on the war memorials in Stanstead Abbots and St Margaret's.

The formation of a 'Friends of St James Church' was announced and it is hoped that the village will be able to make much more use of this splendid medieval church that we have.

The treasurers report was discussed and it was very pleasing to see that the society currently has in excess of £4000 in its account.

The new committee (see bottom right) was elected with all the societies officers and committee members standing for re-election with two additional members welcomed, Gerald Coppen and Linda Gifford. A warm round of appreciation was given to the Chairman.

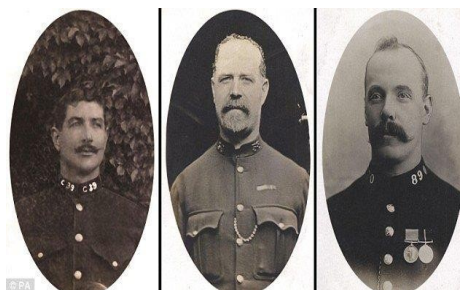
Finally Ian thanked the people to whom we must all be thankful, for, if not for them then SALHS would not exist, **our members**.

## Notes from the Past Part 6

In his notebook William Clift wrote of more than just local news and events, as you can see from the following notes he made:

November 23rd 1910 - Dr. Crippen hanged

December 5th 1910 - 5 Police officers shot in Houndsditch London. (This led to the Siege of Sydney street) See below, the 3 police officers that died at the shooting, from left to right, Sgt R. Bentley, Sgt C. Tucker, Pc W. Choat.



June 2nd 1911 - King George crowned.

March 1912 - National Miners strike begins.

*More from the notebook in next issue*

### The SALHS Committee May 2014

Hon. President	Ron Dale
Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Lynne Heraud
Treasurer	Glenis Collins
Website	Brian Johnson
Archivist/Historian	Ray Dixon
Archivist/Facebook	Andrea Coppen
Public Relations	Bob Hunt
School Liaison/ Programme Organiser	Janet Dance
Newsletter	Terry Collins
Parish Council Rep	Julia Davies
Co-opted Member	Jenny Johnson
Committee Members	Linda Gifford Gerald Coppen

General enquiries email  
Admin@salhs.org.uk