

S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 19

Editor—Terry Collins

AGM 2016

Our May meeting consisted of the Annual General Meeting followed, after drinks and nibbles, by a short presentation by Stephen Ruff who was back for a third time.

Chairman Ian White welcomed everybody present and gave his report for the year. He began by reminding the members of the fact that we have only been in existence for five years and in that time we have become one of the largest local history societies in the county.

He then went on to talk of the varied and interesting speakers that we have had during the past year, with topics as diverse as 'Workhouses' in Hertfordshire to 'Archaeology' and from 'Market Towns' to 'The Royal Gunpowder Mills' which he said he would

have to visit soon. He also mentioned the February 'Antiques Roadshow' event and said that we would try to put on another in the coming year. He thanked Lynne Heraud in her absence for arranging the event. He also spoke of our social events, the annual summer barbecue, courtesy of Jane and Ray Dixon and the October Quiz by Terry and Glenis Collins as well as the Christmas Party, both of which will be taking place again.

Ian then spoke briefly about our regular visits to local places of interest, so far these have been to HALS, Rye House Gatehouse and shortly to Scotts Grotto.

All the current committee were prepared to carry on their work and were unanimously re-elected and the Chairman was thanked by Bob Hunt for all

the hard work he has put in. The treasurers report was read and adopted and we ended the year with over £4000 in our bank account.

Stephen Ruff's presentation after the break was not so much a talk but a series of photographs from around the county, with the audience being asked if they knew where they were taken, as he possibly did not. The pictures scanned a number of years and varied from towns and villages to scenes along the river Lea and in the countryside. Stephen was his usual amusing self and his accompanying comments were always guaranteed to raise a smile.

Ian closed the evening by thanking the speaker and all those present.

Terry Collins

July 2016

Scott's Grotto Ware

Twelve SALHS members went to Ware to visit the grotto on 22nd June. We were met by one of the volunteers and taken round,

Scott's grotto was built in the 1750's by John Scott, an 18th Century Quaker poet, who lived at Amwell House. Its large gardens have mostly disappeared over the past 200 years with only the grotto and the summerhouse remaining. It is not known when the building actually started or how long it took to complete. The reason for its existence can only be guessed at, but it was fashionable in the 18th Century for those with large estates to have grottos built.



The grotto extends 20 meters into the chalk hillside and consists of six underground chambers each linked by air tunnels and passageways and all decorated with thousands of shells, flints and pieces of coloured glass.

The largest chamber is called The

Council Chamber and has within it six niches or seats set into the wall. John Scott's most famous visitor was Dr. Johnson who visited in 1773 and described the garden as a 'Fairy Hall'. Above the grotto is an 18th Century summerhouse which, when first built would have had splendid views over the whole of Ware.

In 1974 East Herts Council acquired the property and the Ware Society began to open it to the public. In 1987 the Society proposed that a full renovation programme be undertaken and the fully restored grotto was opened on 30th April 1991 by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu.

Terry Collins

SALHS Visit to Rye House Gatehouse - 20th April 2016

Lee Valley Park Ranger Lawrence Pember guided about 13 members around this property. We saw the displays about its history, being built by a Danish Knight – Sir Andrew Ogard in 1443 – one of the first brick built buildings in the country which now has Grade 1 listed status. There was an audio commentary along with display boards detailing the famous ‘Rye House Plot’ of 1683.

Rye House passed through many different families including the Parr’s (Catherine Parr being one of Henry VIII’s wives). We heard how it became a Victorian pleasure park in 1857. The site was bought in 1904 by Hoddesdon Brewery who ran it till the 1930’s. Shortly after the Second World War it was damaged by fire and fell into neglect. In 1970 Lee Valley Regional Park purchased it and embarked on a programme of restoration and the Gatehouse was finally opened by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu in 1989.

Lawrence informed us of a recent activity that had taken place there – a Paranormal Investigation by various Paranormal Societies. A number of ‘ghosts’ had been detected including a Watchman, a Young Boy, a rather nasty Old Man in the cellars, a Knights Templar outside on the green area between the Gatehouse and car park and even some dogs belonging to previous families who resided there – a pet burial area is thought to be located at the far end of the grounds.



This is one of the reports given after a night of observations :-

Paranormal sightings

Rye House Gatehouse has only recently been opened to paranormal investigations; however reports of cold spots and orbs, ghostly lights on the battlements, black masses on the spiral staircase and manifestations caught on camera have all occurred during investigations. There are reports of a number of active presences from different centuries that can manifest in various ways during investigations, however one ghost always makes his presence known at Rye House and that is a spirit from the 17th Century, known as the Night Watchman.

Janet Dance

THANK YOU IAN: from Ron Dale

I have often been complemented on producing the first history of our village and for its winning an award. This has put me in a quandary as I know the book had several faults and most of them mine. However it occurred to me that I have never thanked our chairman, Ian White, for the part he played in the book. Halfway through writing the book, he asked me if I was using footnotes, and when I told him that I had no idea how to do them, being fairly new to a computer, he showed me how to do it. He also helped in re-arranging the chapters. There were probably other little touches he did which I

cannot recall. The book won an award from the British Local History magazine and again this was thanks to Ian who put it forward for this. I must also state that I had help from David Perman, Ware historian, who tried his best to curb my enthusiasm and imagination and to our own stalwart, Brian Johnson who sorted out the illustrations.

One or two people have asked how much I received for the award! Let me tell you, I would not have accepted any cash award. A little scroll of paper with a few printed words on it, tied up in pink ribbon was the award and it means more to me than any cash award and once

again have to thank Julia Davis for driving me up to London to receive it and to Ian who kept me upright on my walking stick. I do hope you paid Julia the petrol money Ian.

I have not always agreed with Ian’s decisions, but if you can get two West Riding Yorkshiremen to agree, then you’re a better man than I Gunga Din. Finally I would like to say that we all owe thanks to Ian for seeing us these first years of the Society as Chairman, no easy job, but I am certain that there is no-one else who could do it as well. Thank you Ian!

Ron Dale

Dick Turpin-The Man and the Myth

A return visit from Stephen Poulter in June led to an entertaining evening looking at the life of Dick Turpin, the most famous of the 18th Century highwayman. Stephen began by looking at the myths that had grown up around him, starting with the novel 'Rookwood' written by Harrison Ainsworth in 1834, in which Turpin is portrayed as a romantic hero, a sort of Robin Hood character. Stories were published about him until the late 1950's when they appeared in comic form. The first film about Turpin was made in 1925 and starred the actor Tom Mix, this was followed, among others, by a Disney version in 1971 and at least one TV series from 1979/82.

The true story of Dick Turpin is, however rather different. Born in 1703 in Hempstead, Essex the son of a butcher. He was educated there and followed his father and became a butcher. He married a local girl, Betty Millington, and began his life of crime by stealing local farmers cattle and selling the meat. He began to poach deer from Epping Forest and selling the venison as part of the

Gregory gang from Essex. In one of their raids they threatened to cut of the leg of their victim, aged 70, unless he gave them his money. There was now a reward of £50 for Turpin's capture, and he was almost caught when the rest of the gang were captured in Edgware. Both of the Gregory brothers were hanged but Turpin escaped.

The first report of highway robbery was in July 1735, after this first robbery he disappeared for two years but was back in 1737 when he was almost caught in Puckeridge where he was meeting his wife. Turpin was now working with another thief. Matthew King, and after a robbery in Loughton King was captured, Turpin had arrived at the scene and in the shoot out that followed Turpin accidentally shot King and Turpin escaped again. In 1738 he went to Yorkshire under the alias John Palmer, and after a drunken argument he shot at a valuable gamecock. The Justice's were sent to get Turpin bound over but he refused to go with them. They were now becoming suspicious of the horses that

Turpin was selling. In 1739 Turpin wrote to his brother-in-law in Essex but on delivery the letter was refused. A local teacher recognised the writing and informed the local justice who went to York and Turpin was arrested, at his trial he was found guilty, not for highway robbery but for horse stealing, and was hanged on 7th April 1739 at York in front of a large crowd. It is said that Turpin was very brave while on the scaffold and chatted to the hangman, who was a reformed highwayman himself, before jumping off the gallows to his death. Legend has it that he paid for three mourners to prevent his body being taken for dissection.

In legend Turpin is always associated with his horse Black Bess and the famous ride to York. Turpin did have a horse of that name, but he stole it at gunpoint from a Mr Majors. As for the 200 mile ride to York, that was in fact carried out by another highwayman, John 'Swift Nick' Nevison some 50 years before, when he rode from Rochester in Kent to York in 15 hours to estab-

The Herts Regiment at the Somme

Our speaker in July was Jim Maynard from the Herts at War Project, who are in the process of naming all the men from Hertfordshire who fell in the Great War, whichever branch of the services they were in. To Date they have details of over 26000 names from over 600 war memorials across the county. Jim was here to tell us about the Hertfordshire Regiment and there story through the war with the main focus on 1916 and the Battle of the Somme.

Most of us are aware of the centenary events that have taken place across the country and in France to commemorate the thousands who died, Jim told us of the battles in which the Herts. Regiment fought but gave it a more personal touch by telling the stories of individuals who fought and in most cases died .

Many of the recruits into the Hertfordshire Regiment were, in fact, posted to other regiments, 25% of them going to the Bedfordshire Regt. The Herts. Regiment

were all members of the Territorial Army and when war came in August 1914 they were ready for it. They sailed to France on 5th November on the SS City of Chester. On arriving they were marched to Zillebeke near the Belgian town of Ypres where they remained for some time.

During this time they were in the same brigade as the Guards Regiments and so became known as the "Herts Guards", so much so that they were the only other infantry regiment to number their companies 1-4 instead of the usual A-D. Their first action with the Guards was at the battle for Cuinchy in February 1915. Later that year they took part in the battles for Festubert and Loos, during which they suffered a number of casualties which were replaced by fresh drafts of men from England.

By 1916 the Herts and Bedfordshire Regts. Had moved to the Somme front although they did not take part in the early stages of the battle, at the beginning of July.

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The Herts. Regiment at the Somme

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One of the Allied objectives on 1st July was the notorious Schwaben Redoubt, a German strongpoint almost 500 yards long and 200 yards deep filled with machine gun posts, barbed wire, and deep bunkers. Up until September all attempts to take it had failed, but on 26th/27th the Bedfordshire Regt. attacked and succeeded in taking the front face of the redoubt, but it was not until October 14th the whole of the redoubt was captured.

The men from Hertfordshire remained with their regiments on the Somme until November 1916 when they took part in the final battle of the Somme campaign at the Ancre valley. They attacked across the valley in thick mist and took the enemy by surprise, taking over 250 prisoners and capturing their trenches. They were taken out of the front line at the end of the month and trans-

ferred to Belgium, where they stayed until after the battle for Passchendaele in July 1917, where they fought with very heavy casualties at St



Barbed wire at Schwaben Redoubt

Julien.

During the evening Jim spoke about a number of men who served in either the Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire Regiments and among them were the Satterswaite brothers, Jack and Walter. Jack was killed and Walter was wounded and died from his wound 47 years later.

We also heard about Ted Ambrose from Hitchin who joined the Bedfordshire Regt. in 1915. He caught measles twice while serving and then

he was shell shocked. After treatment he went back to fight on the Somme where he was wounded in the head, he was sent to hospital far behind the lines but died of his wound. His personal possessions were sent home to his mother and they were then passed to the Herts at War Project and were kindly bought along for us to see, they included his medals, family photographs and his wallet which still bears the hole made by the bullet that hit him..

While a Christmas ceasefire took place in 1914 in one area, and there was no football match it did not happen everywhere, as Private Percy Huggins from Ware was shot by a German sniper on 25th December 1914, another British soldier went after the sniper that had killed Percy and gained revenge only for him to also fall victim to another German sniper.

Jim answered a number of questions and was warmly thanked for his informative talk.

Terry Collins

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.

The SALHS Committee May 2015

Hon. President	Ron Dale
Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Lynne Heraud
Treasurer	Glenis Collins
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
Committee Members	Linda Gifford Gerald Coppen Rob Gifford
Website Manager	Brian Johnson
General enquiries email	Admin@salhs.org.uk

Forthcoming events

August 14th 2016	BBQ Members Only. Details to follow by e-mail
September 9th 2016	Maltings and its Role in Stanstead Abbots by Tony Crosby
October 14th 2016	SALHS Quiz Nights. Details to follow
November 11th 2016	1216, The Legacy of Runnymede, Civil War, The Siege of Hertford Castle and Knight who saved England by Ian White
December 9th 2016	Christmas Party Members Only
January 13th 2017	Hertfordshire Literary Lives by Marion Hill

Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm

Members Free. Non Members £2 Tea, Coffee and biscuits included