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Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 34

Editor—Terry Collins

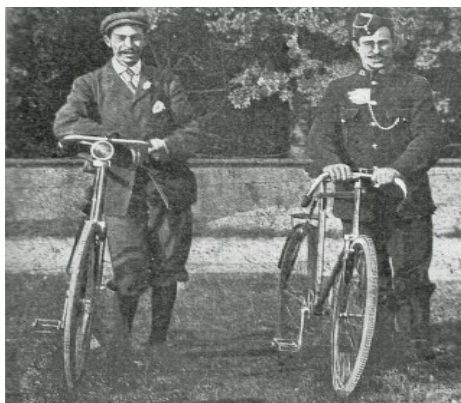
April 2020

Policing in Hertfordshire

For our February meeting we welcomed Nik Pringle, He has been a Police officer since 1980 when he joined the force, spending time as both a beat officer and a coroners officer. He is now an Inspector in the Special Constabulary and in addition he is also a member of the Police Historical Society.

Policing in Hertfordshire really began in 1830 with the passing of the Lighting and Watching Act and then in 1836 St Albans introduced its own police force which by 1841 had spread to the whole county. When it was founded the force consisted of 4 Superintendents, 2 Inspectors and 11 Constables. The first chief constable was Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Robertson who was appointed in May but had nobody to be chief of for over a month because the constables were not appointed until the following month, but he remained in his post for 39 years and died in his post in 1880. At the time of his death he had a force of 70 officers covering an area of 576 square miles with a population of 120,000. Not all of the county was covered by the Hertfordshire force as areas such as Cheshunt, Rickmansworth, Potters Bar and Cheshunt were all still part of the Metropolitan Police and remained so until 2000. The force at that time had a great deal of trouble with drunkenness so much so that in the cause of the first year of operation all the constables were sacked. More reliable men were employed and the force gradually expanded but it still needed some improvement and this came with the appointment of the next Chief Constable.

Lieutenant Henry Daniell served from 1800 until 1911 and is looked upon as the best of the Chief Constables. It was during his reign as Chief Constable that the beat system came into being, this followed a particularly brutal murder in a house in Railway Street Hertford. A woman named Mercy Nicholls was heard arguing with her partner and screaming broke out. Neighbours called into the police



Hertfordshire Scorchers 1899

station but the officer on duty said he would not be able to attend and it was at least 4 hours before police went to the scene by which time they were too late Mercy was found with over 50 stab wounds. It was after this terrible event that the beat system came into being which meant that officers on patrol were at specific places at defined times, after this the beat system was taken up by police forces across the country. Daniell also introduced the idea of having a 'police house in the area where the officer worked. He also had very stringent rules that officers had to follow, they had to wear their uniform at all times even when off duty, he introduced annual leave of three days plus one rest day per month, in addition they had to work a minimum of twenty

years before they could get a pension. Constables were issued with a seven page guide on how to behave as a police officer and were expected to follow all the guidelines. It is a sign of the times that many officers did not live very long after they left the force the average time being just 3 years.

One of the other new ideas that Colonel Daniell introduced was the bicycle for his officers, which were still being used in 1912, officers using these were known as Hertfordshire Scorchers. The officers using them were paid one penny extra for every mile they cycled. After Daniell left the constabulary got their first car, a Swift cycle car in 1914 and in 1921 their first motor cycle.

In 1899 the force had to investigate a crime which gained notoriety, the murder of Caroline Ansell, she was a resident of Leavesden asylum, during a visit from her family she was given a cake, shortly after she was taken ill along with other patients with whom she shared the cake. She died shortly afterwards and the post mortem showed she had died from phosphorous poisoning. Her sister Mary was arrested and charged with her murder, and was found guilty and sentenced to death, despite a petition signed by more than 100MP's she was hung and buried in the grounds of St Albans prison (Which is where the TV series *Porridge* was filmed) This murder led to the introduction of the Poisons Act.

Moving on to the 20th century, in 1987 they introduced the first drugs squad and in the first year made 80 arrests and became a police Centre Of Excellence. It was also one of the first police forces in the country to use fingerprinting. *Terry Collins*

Stanstead Abbotts Airfield Plaque



In a previous issue of the newsletter I briefly wrote about a First World War airfield on the edge of the village (Issue Number 25 January 2018) near the junction of Netherfield Lane and Roydon Road. We now have a stone memorial plaque marking where it was. The airfield was used from May 1918 until mid March 1919 by number 39 Squadron RAF. This unit had been formed in 1916 as a Home Defence Squadron tasked with keeping London safe from German airships and later Gotha Bombers. It was a pilot from this unit that shot down a Zeppelin over Cuffley in September 1916. At the time they were flying B.E.2 aircraft a twin seater biplane until September 1917

when they were re-equipped with Bristol F2 fighters which was in service until the end of the war.

The airfield in Stanstead Abbotts had no tarmac runway just a grass strip and was used mainly to train pilots in night flying which they did from the Stanstead Abbotts airfield until October 1918 when they were transferred to France where they stayed until after the Armistice. The airfield was relinquished by the RAF in May 1919.

The Stort Story

Following his talk to us about the River Lea Richard Thomas returned in March to tell us about the river Stort. The river's source is in Essex near the town of Clavering and it flows from there through gentle countryside until it reaches Bishop Stortford. From there it is navigable for narrow boats until it joins the Lea near Hoddesdon. This stretch is the man-made Stort Navigation and is 13.8 miles long and has 15 locks to negotiate. Thirteen of them are turf-sided and two are brick-sided.

It was not until the late 1750s that work began on the river to make it navigable, this was carried out under the auspices of George Jackson, a civil servant who was made Judge Advocate of the Fleet a post he held until his death. He was a friend of Captain Cook who named Port Jackson in Australia and Point Jackson in New Zealand after him. It took over three years to canalise and build the navigation under the direction of the engineer Thomas Yeoman and the contractors William Glyn and his son, all at a cost of £7000. The navigation opened on 25th October 1769 when three loaded barges arrived at Bishop Stortford, two with passengers and one with coal. There followed a huge party for the invited guests with roast oxen and enough food it is said would feed 6000 people, which lasted all night, (a slight exaggeration as the population was only about 2400)

In 1785 George Jackson became the sole owner of the navigation despite one or two legal challenges.

Then in 1795 Jackson introduced the Stort halfpenny token which was redeemable at the company's Swan dock in Bishop Stortford, as there was a national shortage of small denomination coins. The reverse shows a horse-drawn boat on the river.



Stort Navigation Halfpenny

In 1811 the total amount of cargo carried on the Navigation was 40,000 tons, despite this Sir George did not look on it as a successful venture. By now George Jackson had been knighted and was now known as Sir George Duckett. He got into financial difficulties when he became involved in a scheme to build the Hertford

Continued on page 3

The Stort Story continued

Canal. By 1825 Sir George Duckett had died and been succeeded by his son, also George who ran into financial difficulties and the canal was put up for auction but nobody seemed interested in it and for the next 21 years it remained in the hands of the Official Receiver. In 1842 the Northern and Eastern Railway reached Bishop Stortford and the Navigation had competition in the carriage of goods along the Stort Valley and the income fell heavily over the next few years.

Following a protracted legal battle for ownership of the navigation it was transferred to the Gurney's a Quaker brewing family. But they did not want to hold the canal for long as the money earned from the tolls had been falling over the years and in 10 years it had halved. So in 1873 it was sold to Truman, Hanbury another brewing company, they in turn sold it to Sir Walter Gibney who, in 1905 formed the Stort Navigation Company. He then started to negotiate with the Lee Navigation but no decision on a sale was agreed. Later that year one side of Brick Lock, near Roydon, collapsed trapping most of the barges operating on the Navigation above it, as it was only the second lock from the junction with the Lee. Mr Gibney had already offered the Navigation to the Lee Navigation for a very small fee but they had not reach any conclusion, even so the Lee Navigation sent six extra men to help repair the damaged lock. And it reopened in October 1909. The Lee Conservatory Board had by now concluded that it would cost over £10,000 to repair the navigation back into good order. By 1907 the income from the transport of goods had dropped to £319. Gibney then offered the Navigation to the Lee Conservatory Board for nothing which they of course accepted, spending the vast sum of 25p in total to take control of the Stort Navigation from 1st June 1911.

Before taking over the Lee Conservatory had managed to get a government loan of £12,500 to be repaid when profits were made and so work began on rebuilding in 1913 but the outbreak of the First World War caused a hold up apart from urgent repairs. The work began again after the war and the Navigation reopened on 4th July 1924 by the Transport Minister Harry Gosling. Some of the traffic along the river started to flow again particularly timber, grain and of course malt. However this did not last for very long as it began to decline after the Second World War and the last commercial traffic was in 1972. However the Stort had seen a growth in leisure traffic which has expanded and given it a new lease of life.

The 15 locks along the Stort Navigation currently looked after by the Canal and River Trust. They will take boats with a maximum length of 27.5m with a width of just 4m. There is a towpath the whole length of the Navigation which is also part of a number of long distance footpaths. The 15 locks begin at lock 1 just south of Hockerill Bridge and finish at lock 15 at Lower Lock just before it joins the Lee near Fieldes Weir. The lock which has the greatest drop is number 8, the Harlow Mill Lock, which drops 2.67m (8ft 9ins). The nearest



Footbridge on the Stort Navigation

lock on the Stort Navigation to Stanstead Abbots is at Roydon which has a drop of 1.83m and has a lock keepers cottage built in 1830 which still stands, made of painted brick with a slate roof and above the door there is a plaque which reads, G.D.1830 commemorating Sir George Duckett who was in the main responsible for the construction of the waterway.

At the end of another intriguing talk by Richard he kindly answered a few questions from an enthralled audience and was thanked by the Chairman. *Terry Collins*

For a much more detailed history of the Stort Navigation go to the following website www.leeandstort.co.uk

Stop Press Village History Board

At last the much anticipated village history board is now in place. It is next to the notice board at the entrance to the High Street car park. We need to thank Linda and Rob Gifford, John Lloyd and Dick Dixon for all their hard work in producing and erecting the board. Do go and look at it, if you can it is a brilliant piece of work.



The Historic Importance of Malting in Stanstead Abbots by Stuart Moye

It is uncertain exactly when Stanstead Abbots began to produce significant amounts of malt for the London Market. However as early as 1247/8 London Merchants built a riverside storehouse by the bridge on the St Margarets side of the river. They used this to hold malt and other produce destined for the London Market. The oldest industrial malting remains found in modern times were an Elizabethan malting kiln and associated underground fire pit located within the most ancient surviving part of the Rose and Crown Malting. Although production grew to meet the rising demands of London it was not until the period between 1680 and 1840 that the local area was to become the most important malting area in the country. This was to lead to a series of attempts to improve the navigation on the River Lea in order to convey the growing amount of goods, including malt, needing to be carried to London. Although Ware was the dominant local malting town, malting became important in both Stanstead Abbots and Hertford as well. All three places, after about 1720 producing what was known as "Ware Malt" a type of brown malt much favoured for the production of porter and stout beers by the London Brewers. So much so that it attracted a premium price on the London Market. The premium price being so advantageous that some barley was brought by coastal shipping from elsewhere in the country to be then barged up the River Lea for turning into "Ware Malt" before heading down-river to be sold in London. Malt production in Stanstead Abbots was closely connected to that in Ware through such families as the Hankins who had malting and other interests in both places, over many generations. These bountiful times began to come to an end when the brewers of the Trent Valley began to produce pale ales initially for the colonies, principally India. This was followed by other brewers elsewhere in the country who began to brew their own pale ales. This was not too much of a threat for local brewers until the arrival of the railways which meant these new products could be more easily and cheaply transported to London. These new lighter coloured beers became quickly popular with Londoners and by the 1870s "Ware Malt" was no longer commanding a premium price on the London Market. Inevitably the local area lost its importance as the primary source of malt in the country. Once into the C20th profits and then production of malt locally declined. The two world wars only added to the losses to the local industry. The decline continued leading to even the once mighty malting town of Ware closing its last malting in 1994. Stanstead Abbots however has managed, against all the odds, to retain one active malting in Roydon Road. This is operated by French and Jupps who specialise in high quality coloured malt using local barley. This means that, perhaps uniquely, the village of Stanstead Abbots has had a continuous tradition of commercial malting for at least 800 years, so far.



Maltings behind the old Rose and Crown site

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Bob Hunt

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Treasurer Glenis Collins

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Archivist/Facebook Andrea Coppen

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Terry Collins

Parish Council Rep Julia Davies

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Linda Gifford

Gerald Coppen

Rob Gifford

John Lloyd

Rosemary James

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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

May	1st	2020	Cancelled
June	12th	2020	Cancelled
July	10th	2020	St Albans South Signal Box by Tony Furse
August	16th	2020	Barbecue (Members Only)
September	11th	2020	Reconstructing Queen Victoria's Childhood Home by Dr. Lee Prosser
October	9th	2020	Odd Pots & Foreigners by Keith Fitzpatrick Matthews

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