

S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 6

Editor—Terry Collins

May 2013

SALHS BOOK LAUNCH



Ron Dale receives his certificate as SALHS Honorary Life President from SALHS Chairman Ian White. Full report Page 2

The Meridian Line

Our speaker in April was Ruth Swallow and the topic was The Meridian Line and its links to Stanstead Abbotts. We all know that the line separates East from West much the same as the Equator separates North from South, and that its path begins at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich. But how many of us are aware that the Prime Meridian has its beginnings in the quest for Longitude. From the time of Columbus in the 15th Century, mariners had been searching for a means of measuring longitude once out of site of land. Nautical charts were inaccurate

and much of the world remained unexplored. A number of the worlds maritime nations offered rewards to anybody who could solve the longitude problem.

In the UK the Admiralty offered a reward of £20,000, (£2.87 million today) to the person who could permanently solve the problem. Enter John Harrison a Yorkshire born clockmaker since the age of 13. In 1730 Harrison created a description and drawings for a proposed maritime clock, capable of withstanding rough voyages, with many changes in temperature, pressure and humid-

ity. It took Harrison five years to build his first sea clock, it was essentially a modified version of his pendulum clock. He applied for the reward but the Admiralty turned him down until the clock had been on a successful trial voyage. It was not until Harrison was 68 years old that he managed to build a sea watch that succeeded. Even then he did not receive the £20,000 reward totally. The Meridian line runs right through Mrs. Swallow's garden, where she has made her own plaque to mark its presence there. Nearby at John Warner school there are three separate markers for the line including a collage made by the pupils. From there the line heads through the north side of St Margarets Road and on towards Great Amwell and Easneye Woods, where there is an obelisk marking the Meridian Line erected in 1903.

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Meridian Marker at Durham Close, Stanstead Abbotts

The Meridian Line

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Heading south the line runs through Isobel Christie park in Hoddesdon and onwards to Waltham Abbey, which has its own Meridian Walk. All the local Meridian markers were improved in 1984 by the local authority as they were starting to look a little weather beaten.

The line first reaches England after leaving the North Pole at Tunstall in East Yorkshire although the Meridian marker there has been eroded by the sea

Greenwich was chosen as the site for the Meridian line after a conference in Washington at which 22 countries chose Greenwich as the preferred site. The Meridian line not only passes through England on its journey from Pole to Pole, after leaving the UK near Peacehaven in East Sussex it then passes through France, Spain, Algeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Ghana and then it touches no further land until it reaches Antarctica.

Greenwich Observatory is also home to the meridian laser which shines along the path of the Prime Meridian in a Northerly direction and with binoculars can be seen from a distance of sixty miles. Greenwich also marks the site of the Meridian Trail which runs for almost 273 miles.

At the end of her talk Mrs. Ruth Swallow and Mrs. Janet Dance, who helped with the PowerPoint presentation, were thanked by the chairman for their entertaining evening.



John Harrison and his sea watch

SALHS Book Launched

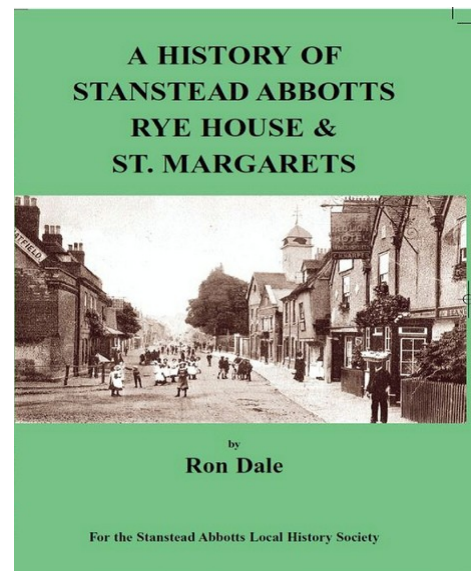
The AGM on May 10th saw the launch of the first book published for SALHS, Ron Dale's 'History of Stanstead Abbots, Rye house and St Margarets.'

As one of the founders of the society Ron has spent almost two years researching and writing his book, after he had agreed to put together the results of the information we had gathered. Little did he realize at the time, the amount of work he would need to put in to produce the finished printed article.

The book looks at Stanstead Abbots, Rye House and St Margarets for over a thousand years of recorded history, from Saxon times until the advent of the 21st Century. It is well illustrated, with most of the photographs from the SALHS archives. Some of the topics covered within the book include the village pubs and inns, crime and punishment, notable families and the coming of the railways. Perhaps the most interesting for many members will be the results of the village survey carried out in 1949. This shows in detail the condition of the houses in the village it also lists the

premises in the High Street, it is difficult to believe, that there were 37 shops and 4 pubs, just compare that to today.

Thanks are due to the Parish Council for their generous grant which made the print possible. This book would make a fine gift for anybody who has lived, or indeed still does live in the village. Contact any committee member to get your copy, and its only £10



The Ware Mutiny

Our speaker in May, Dr Alan Thompson, told us that if you were to walk from Ware to Hertford, just as you pass Chadwell Springs Golf Club you would be by the site of the Ware mutiny, which took place there on November 15th 1647, at Cockbush or Corkbush field.

This little known episode took place at the end of the First Civil War (1640-1646) and involved two Regiments from the Parliamentarian New Model Army.

This Army had successfully fought against the forces of Charles I but like most armies of that period it was

to a large extent, split along class lines with the foot soldiers, the pikemen and musketeers, made up from working class men, many of them from the countryside. The cavalry on the other hand were generally upper class or members of the aristocracy, able to provide their own horses. However nearly all was funded by Parliament which by the late summer of 1647 had run out of funds to pay for the Army. At the same time a new radical movement, the Levellers, had begun to gain popularity amongst the people and more importantly

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The Ware Mutiny

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among some elements of the Army. The Levellers were a popular political movement dedicated to extending suffrage to all men, not women, religious freedom, and equality before the law. Their popularity was particularly strong in Eastern and Southern England and London. They had produced a document called 'An Agreement of the People' a series of manifestos setting out their proposals. In an attempt to avoid potential rumblings of discontent among the troops, the so called 'Grande'es' of the Army Council, namely the Army Commander General Fairfax, Cavalry commander General Cromwell, and Commissioner General Ireton offered to hold a series of debates with the soldiers, they all took place at the Church of St Mary in Putney starting on 28th October 1647.

At these debates the rank and file of the Army put forward a set of proposals called 'The Case of the Army Truly Stated' which dealt with changes to the constitution of England and was based on the Levellers 'Agreement of the People'. Obviously the Grande'es of the Army did not favour this at all and they put forward alternatives called 'The Heads of the Proposals,' which General Ireton claimed dealt with all the

changes the Levellers had proposed. It was agreed by both sides that three further reviews should take place between the soldiers and the Army Council, at three different locations around the country. The first of these being at Corkbush Field on November 15th 1647.

A few days earlier another unrelated mutiny had occurred in Bedfordshire when troops who had been ordered to Newcastle, turned south instead after dismissing their own officers, some of whom then went to Putney to warn the Army Council.

Whilst among those gathered at Corkbush were two regiments that were not authorised to be there, Colonel Harrison's Regiment of Horse and Colonel Lilburne's Regiment of Foot. When the troops assembled at Corkbush some of them were wearing copies of the 'Agreement of the People' in their hats, together with the motto 'England's Freedom, Soldier's Rights.' On the previous night, Cromwell, Fairfax and Ireton had stayed at the Bell inn in Hertford (now the Salisbury Hotel) and they moved swiftly to Corkbush the following morning only to be presented with a copy of the 'Agreement of the People' by a senior officer Colonel Gainsborough, who was then arrested on the orders of General Fairfax, who had by then managed to get the ma-



Oliver Cromwell

majority of the troops to accept the 'Head of the proposals' document and sign a pledge agreeing to it. However the two regiments that had arrived unexpectedly refused to remove the papers from their hats and Cromwell had to ride among them, sword drawn, and tear them from the soldier's hats himself. On two occasions. Orders were given for the arrest of the ringleaders and eleven were arrested and condemned to court martial and death. On the orders of the Army Council however, eight of the accused had their sentences commuted, and the three remaining they were forced to draw lots. Two survived, but the third, Private Richard Arnold, was shot on the spot as an example to others.

This stopped the mutiny gathering pace, some of the other mutineers were sent to St Albans where they were imprisoned locally. After Christmas 1647 those troops who had signed the pledge of allegiance were allowed to disband and no further action was taken against them. By then the King had escaped from Hampton Court and had signed an 'Engagement' with the Scots that led to them invading England and the outbreak of the Second Civil War, which ended with the capture of the king followed by his trial and execution at Whitehall on Tuesday January 30th 1649. Dr Thompson was thanked by the Chairman in interesting and educational evening.



The Putney Debates

Notes From The Past Part 2

This is a remedy for an embrocation to cure sprains as found in one of William Clift's notebooks. This is from the second of the books and it is possible it may have been written by Williams's wife Jane. This was written sometime between 1880 and 1892

Take three whites of eggs, beat them up well, put them in a pint bottle, then add a tablespoon of sweet oil. Fill it up with best white vinegar, shake them up



well and apply twice a day, with gentle exercise.

Not sure how it works but I have to say it does not sound that pleasant to rub egg whites into your feet. But if it succeeds then so be it!

Forthcoming Events

Friday June 14th The Lost Gardens of Hertfordshire 7.30pm Parish Hall

Tuesday June 25th Hill House Visit- Members only 6.00pm
This will be restricted to a maximum of 30 people

Monday July 15th Easneye Visit- Members only
Details to follow, restricted to 30 people

Sunday August 15th BBQ at 90 Cappell Lane-Members only
Further details to follow

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

SALHS AGM 2013

The AGM began with the Chairman's report, in which he reflected on how well the society had performed in its inaugural year, with membership in excess of one hundred and still growing.

He thanked the contributions made by the Parish Council and the Ashlea Society, together with hard work that the committee carry out in organising events etc. At the same time he sadly reminded us all that we had lost our first secretary Charlie Lovick shortly after the society was formed and how much his enthusiasm would be missed.

Looking back on the past year there had been talks almost every month on topics ranging from the river to the railway, a visits programme started with Stansteadbury, and then the Maltings and Broxbourne museum. Socially there had been a great Xmas party and a successful Quiz night which had raised over £400 for the society's funds.

He thanked Brian Johnson for our excellent website full of wonderful photographs of the village in bygone days, and a number of articles reflecting local history. He thanked the relevant committee for the Newsletters and the PR work carried out and pointed out that there is now a

future programme almost through to April 2014.

The financial report was tabled and set out the current position. It was noted that the total expenditure on the book production had yet to be finalised, and that the real figure for assets was approximately £400 at the end of the financial year. The report also confirmed that the cost of single membership would be reduced to £8.

The chairman thanked Glenis Collins for her work in setting up bank accounts, etc and carrying out the financial affairs of the society.

The committee was then re-elected unanimously, with one extra person nominated and approved by the committee as Membership Secretary. Finally the Chairman thanked everyone for attending. not just this meeting but the programme throughout the year.

The SALHS Committee May 2013

Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Lynne Heraud
Treasurer	Glenis Collins
Website	Brian Johnson
Archivist/Historian	Ray Dixon
Public Relations	Bob Hunt
School Liaison/ Programme Organiser	Janet Dance
Newsletter	Terry Collins
Membership Sec.	Jane Free
Parish Council Rep.	Julia Davies
Committee Member	Pam Harris
Co-opted Member	Jenny Johnson

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