



S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 8

Editor—Terry Collins

October 2013

Sanville Gardens and the Lea Valley Nurseries

Our speaker in September was local resident and nurseryman Nigel Copping, a figure well known to many of the audience.

Nigel began by giving us a brief background to his family and how they began in the nursery business. His great-grandfather worked on Lord Henniker's estate in Suffolk, he lived on just one shilling a week, but with his food and lodging included, he managed. After he married he moved to London where he had seven sons. They worked all around the south of England. The flowers they grew were sold at Covent Garden.

Nigel's grandfather worked in Suffolk, orders for flowers were sent by telegram and they were sent to

London by train. About 1915 they moved to Dane End and sold produce in Hertford during the First World War and took over the covered market in Hertford. At the wars end Nigel's father was told that he could take over the business at Dane End. Following this his grandfather took out a lease for shop premises in Hertford, selling the produce from both Dane End and Panshanger where they had also leased a garden. It was at this time that the family got their first motor lorry to get produce moved, taking over from horse and cart.

The family then bought a 20 acre nursery in Hoddesdon and in 1943 bought a small field in St Margarets shortly followed by the purchase of

42 Sanville Gardens plus a timber yard. After taking over Mr Smiths land and the meadow behind the old Crown pub, Sanville had become a six acre nursery in five steps.

During the War they started to grow tomatoes, at least 80 boxes per day, which went to Marks and Spencer. At about this time Nigel started working for his father, spreading farmyard manure from a wheelbarrow after school. The pansies they grew at the time, were sent to either the shop in Hertford or to Covent Garden, being packed into orange boxes and sent by rail.

After the war the introduction of glass houses in the nursery allowed the growing of bedding plants during the summer. In 1948. Nigel's father bought three wooden teak glass-houses, at auction, in which they began to grow Dahlias. By now they were supplying markets 4 days a week from June until September. At the same to they began to sell summer bedding plants such as Geraniums and Salvias in pots.

In 1960 they sold the Hertford shop and they were now selling over 30.000 plants annually putting them among the top ten growers in the area..

At about this time Nigel had begun growing Dahlias from seed successfully, as they found that during winter they could sprinkle water on the plants

Continued on Page 2



Sanville gardens and the Lea Valley Nurseries

Continued from Page 1

and let the water melt on the leaves leaving them in good condition. Sanville Gardens nursery continued to flourish through the years as Stanstead Abbots grew in area and population, with many local people using it as their preferred nursery.

Lea Valley Growers Association

Nigel then went on to speak in a little detail about the Lea Valley Growers Association. This organisation was founded in Waltham Cross on 31st October 1911 and its aims were to promote and protect the interests of the nursery industry in the Lea Valley area. At the inaugural meeting it was agreed that combined efforts were needed to deal with such problems as insect and fungal pests which had been on the increase, the level of rates that the nurserymen were paying and problems that they were having with outside organisations such as the local railway companies. It was agreed that the annual subscription should be based upon the rateable value of the members holding. Those who were rated over £100 paid one guinea per annum and those rated below paid ten shillings and sixpence. During the period in which it has existed the Association has had both good and bad times. For instance in 1947 they produced over 30,000 tons of vegetables and in 1962 there were 1300 acres under glass. In 1973 however 350 acres of glass were destroyed and some growers were facing ruin as damage caused was valued at over £3 million.

By 1980 over 90% of the members were of Italian origin and the Lea Valley was producing 270 tons of tomatoes per acre.

Nigel finished by taking questions from the audience, and was warmly thanked by the Chairman for his interesting and entertaining talk.

The Red Lion Inn — Circa 1910



Whilst looking through a box of documents from the SALHS archives I came across a small advertising leaflet for the Red Lion Inn from about 1910. The landlord at the time was Mr Alfred Thorn, who, with his wife had previously kept a hotel in Blyth Road, Kensington. He may also have been the chef as he proudly states in the leaflet that he had been a chef at the Junior Carlton Club in London for 25 years.

The foreword to his leaflet is as follows: "As the motorist to-day speeds his way south down the road through Stansted Mountfitchett, Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and Eastwick, he passes on his left the ancient church and Bury of Stanstead Abbots. Then he drops down Cats Hill and into Stanstead Abbots itself. As he turns left by the Mill into the main street, he cannot but notice a large picturesque house which confronts him, the "Red Lion", where he can make a halt assured of a warm welcome, and an excellent meal, if the weather be propitious, in the pleasant garden along-side the mill steam. A few years since he would have driven into its capacious yard beneath a lofty archway but though the yard remains, with ample garage facilities, the archway has gone.

If there were no other evidence, this archway alone indicates that the Red Lion has for centuries been an inn of considerable importance for the wayfarer: but the fine proportions of the house tell the same tale. To understand how this was we must step back far into the past.

The earliest roads in England always followed the river valleys, and the road by which our motorist has arrived at Stanstead Abbots was in its earliest form a trackway following the valley of the Stort. The traveller up the Lea Valley from London reached the village of Thele, as St Margarets was called in the 12th century. Its other name of St Margarets arose, because in 1316 Sir William de Goldington founded a small college of priests there and named it after his wife Margaret: hence the church was dedicated to St Margaret. In order to reach the Stort Valley the traveller turned right at Thele and crossed the river Lea by a ford on the site of the present bridge into Stanstead Abbots. The amount of traffic crossing this ford was so considerable that before the end of the 13th century, shall we say about the year 1280 or 1290 a bridge had been built in place of the ford. The bridge was called

Continued on Page 3

JEREMY BENTHAM IN STANSTEAD ABBOTTS

At the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, Stanstead Bury had an unusual visitor. He had come from London to keep away from war-time bombing in the safety of our ancient manor house, now you may ask what is so unusual about this? The visitor was Jeremy Bentham who was born in 1748 and died on 6 June, 1832. He had been mummified after death on his own instructions and had been kept at University College, London since 1850. To keep him safe from the Blitz he was relocated to Stanstead Bury.

Jeremy Bentham, born in London, was a child prodigy. He was studying Latin at the age of three and by the age of twelve he was a student at Queens College, Oxford. His father desired his brilliant son to follow him into the legal profession, but instead Bentham spent his life criticising and attempting to improve the law by his discipline of Utilitarianism. He became highly respected throughout Europe and his writings are still studied today. However, Jeremy was somewhat eccentric and instructed in his will that his body be mummified on his death and kept in his own

clothes. He even carried two glass eyes to be inserted in his head when the time came. His doctor, Southwood-Smith obeyed his friend's instructions, but during the process, something went wrong and the features of the head became distorted, so it had to be substituted with a wax head. The real head was kept however, with its glass eyes and placed between the feet of the mummified body in the wooden cabinet made to house it. Inside the de-fleshed skin the skeleton is held together with copper wires.

Dr. Southwood-Smith kept his friend's remains at his surgery until 1850 when he retired and he then donated it to the University College,

London. Jeremy Bentham has remained at UCL since then but has had two other trips out of London, in addition to his stay at Stanstead Bury. In 1992 Jeremy was sent on loan to a museum near Essen in Germany, and again to another museum also near Essen in 2002.

First the body (called an auto-*icon* by the university) was kept hidden away in a back room of the university but was later put out on public display in the main building. Then a problem arose when the real head was stolen by students who demanded ransom money for its return to be paid to charity. After it was stolen on two further occasions and was used in a game of football, the decision was made to keep Jeremy's real head in secure storage. Today Jeremy Bentham can be seen sitting in his wooden cabinet in the main university building, still wearing his own clothing. It could be said that he was just keeping his eye on things at UCL and perhaps waiting for his next holiday.



By Ron Dale

The Red Lion Inn - Circa 1910

Continued from Page 2

"Pont de Thele" in French or Pons Tegule in Latin".

The foreword continues with more history of the Red Lion including the uncovering, in 1924 of fine oak panelling in one of the upstairs rooms and the discovery of a secret panel, for what purpose we do not know. It also tells of the finding in 1896 beneath the oak floor an old wrought iron chest. As to what it contained or where it is now his-

tory is silent. There is also a mention of early 17th Century plaster ornament in low relief beneath today's coating, of a carbuncle and a lion rampant.

Mr Thorn continues by advertising the Red Lion's surprisingly numerous attractions, such as, "The dining room is all that can be desired, it is situated alongside the Mill Stream"

"A commodious pavilion by the side of the Mill Stream is an ideal place for refreshments during the season"

"Any special dish will be provided on

application by phone"

At this time, around 1910, the Red Lion was still advertising that they provided stabling as well as a garage for motorists, in addition to accommodation for cyclists. It is listed as ideal for the "Motorist, Cyclist Hiker, Holiday Maker and Day Tripper" It still served Benskins beers. It ends, "You will never regret - When once you tread - On the Red Lion's threshold,- It's enough said"

Notes From The Past Part 4

SALHS Quiz 2013

Looking through a box of SALHS archive material I came across a press cutting from 1977 which reported the death of William Clift's daughter Annie, who had died at the age of 94 and was the oldest resident of the village at the time. She had been in good health and only took to her bed on the day she died.

She had lived at her home at 41 Roydon Road which she shared

with her sisters for 80 years. The last surviving member of a family of two sons and three daughters, her father was a carpenter on the Easneye Estate. She

was born in Cappell Lane opposite the Countess of Huntingdon Free



Church. She went to school in the Clock House, for which her parents paid a penny a week.

When she left school she was apprenticed to a Ware dressmaker. Subsequently, with her sister Helen, she started her own dressmaking business which they ran in the village for 50 years.

She was a member of St Margarets church choir for over 50 years and together with her other sister Edith,

formed the first Girl Guide Company in St Margarets in 1912. She and her two sisters never married and all lived to a ripe old age, Edith died in 1968 and Helen in 1974. Following the

funeral service at St Andrews Church, Annie was buried in St James Cemetery, where her parents and siblings also lie. As a spinster her only relatives were nieces and nephews in Ware and a niece in Norfolk. The picture, taken in 1912, shows Anne on the right of the leader (centre) and her sister Edith to the left.

I was tempted to call this the Quiz Night that almost wasn't, for it was touch and go whether we would proceed with it or not as it was only two days before it was due to take place that we had enough people coming to make it worthwhile.

However the second SALHS quiz took place on Friday 11th October in the Parish Hall. Seventy people took part, doing their best to answer a wide variety of questions spread over ten rounds, with topics ranging from motoring to Royal families and music to numbers.

We held a raffle which raised £125, when added to the profit from ticket sales the total raised was £392 for SALHS funds. Feedback we received from those that attended seems to show that it was enjoyed by all and it may be that there will be another next year. If so I hope that we will get a similar response in numbers but not left until the last minute. And maybe some of you who did not attend this year may do so in 2014, I feel sure that you will enjoy the evening.

I hope that the winners enjoyed their wine and that the losers have found a use for the wooden spoons they won.

Terry

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

Friday November 8th The Black Death & Peasants Revolt. By Ian White.

Friday December 13th Members only Xmas Social Evening. Finger buffet so please bring plate of food to share. Drinks provided. Musical entertainment and Raffle.

Friday January 10th. The Buntingford line by Stephen Ruff

Friday February 14th The New River by John Cunningham

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

The SALHS Committee May 2013

Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Lynne Heraud
Treasurer	Glenis Collins
Website	Brian Johnson
Archivists/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

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