



HARPENDEN & DISTRICT

LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 143

APRIL 2021



Front cover illustration: Ridley's Mangle – see pages 7 and 9

## St. Albans Tour Guides

### **Guided walk**

Historic Harpenden  
Sunday May 9th  
at 2.30pm



In order to comply with social distancing regulations the walk will be limited to 6 people and must be booked in advance via our website.

Adults: £6  
Pay when booking

Meet at the War Memorial  
on the Green

Website [www.stalbanstourguides.co.uk](http://www.stalbanstourguides.co.uk)



# NEWSLETTER 143

APRIL 2021

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## DEADLINE

Please note that the deadline for publication in Newsletter 144 is  
1 July 2021

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Many thanks to the many members who paid their 2021 subscriptions so promptly and particularly if you were able to become a new user of a bank electronic payment method. I managed to say a socially distant hello to some of you who delivered renewal forms by hand and yes I do have an untidy doorstep area with several pairs of shoes etc on display!

Your patience is appreciated as we are conscious that in the last year or so we have sent you rather a lot of paperwork for updating such as the Gift Aid agreement but this should settle down on-going. We now maintain only one membership record file which is held by the Hon Treasurer and is password protected – this is allowing us to keep your details both secure and up to date as we all know to our cost what a tiny mistake can do to the postman's sanity.

I hope to be able to meet you again later this year at our monthly meetings now that I have been promoted from the position of chair monitor.

Finally – a reminder for those whose subs. have not been received yet by us – please check your cheque stubs and bank statements to make sure you have paid and the payment has gone through as some on-line payers were told “computer says no!” i.e. ‘I am on holiday also’.

Chris Brimblecombe

## PROGRAMME FOR 2021

The Society's planned programme of talks for 2021 comprises those talks in the 2020 programme that had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Although it is hoped that this programme of talks will go ahead, they will of course be subject to any future COVID-19 restrictions. Updates will be announced on the Society's website and in future Newsletters.

As well as being subject to any future COVID-19 restrictions, the location of these meetings and future exhibitions may vary, depending upon the date at which the Society gains access to the new Cultural Centre in Rothamsted Park.

## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

SAHAAS	Newsletter 218	November 2020
	Newsletter 216*	May 2020

*(St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society)*

\* originally issued in electronic format

Pinner Local History Society	Newsletter 143	Autumn 2020
	Newsletter 144	Spring 2021

Hitchin Historical Society	Newsletter 56	January 2021
<i>(electronic format)</i>		

Herts Past & Present	3 <sup>rd</sup> Series -Issue 37	Spring 2021
<i>Journal of the Hertfordshire Association for Local History</i>		

## WEBSITE ANNOUNCEMENT

In March 2020 the Society agreed to upgrade our website, as proposed by our host, Community Sites. We worked on the design brief and finalised a new layout by June. We had hoped to arrange face-to-face training for the editors, but Covid restrictions intervened. The present site was ‘frozen’ on 15 March 2021, so the large and varied contents can be moved to the new format, and the editors are being trained ‘on-line’.

Meanwhile you will be able to browse the present website. We hope to re-launch the *harpenden-history* website in an exciting new format by the end of May – in time to promote the opening of Harpenden Museum.

## NEW MEMBERS

Who have joined since the last Newsletter was issued;

Mr R C Thompson

The Society extends its condolences to members who have lost loved ones during the current pandemic.

## CURATOR’S REPORT

### Curatorial Report

1. A collection of First World War documents relating to Pte Mockett, named on the Harpenden War Memorial, has been

offered by his great-niece and is awaited with interest.

2. All our WWII gas masks and containers have been treated for asbestos contamination by a specialist contractor.
3. The cast-iron mangle with ‘C E Ridley Harpenden’ on the frame has been purchased and transported to the Sandridge Gate store. Apart from some traces of woodworm, it is in very good order.
4. Tim Froggatt, a video producer who has worked for St Albans Museums, has quoted for production of a timeline/introduction video for the Museum. This will be about 4 minutes long and will need 35 high-resolution images.
5. It was possible to do a little more work on indexing and marking the artefacts at Sandridge Gate before the latest lockdown period.
6. 15 volunteers have offered to staff the Museum as a result of appeals in *Harpenden Now* and *Forum*.
7. The winter issue of the BALH Local History Newsletter has a feature on the new Museum.
8. Museum design companies will be asked to quote for the design of the Museum.

## Archives

- 1 Photo collection in filing cabinet. During the autumn Kitty

Moores and I started working through the drawers, where photos are filed by geographical location. We are removing bad copies and duplicates, and mounting and adding loose photos eg from Eric Brandreth's collections and other sources, and putting all photos into 'punched pockets'. This involves deleting and adding to the Excel Photo Index, and adding the location of each photo to the Excel Index. Work interrupted by lockdown, though we are now working on some sections from home.

- 2 Photo Index – additions are still initially recorded on cards in the continuous number system, currently c.17,000. However the actual number of entries is c.14,400, showing the additions are less than the considerable number of deletions. As photos are discovered in archive files, if they have been recorded in the Index their location is added. However many photos were not recorded, and are being added when discovered. The aim: to be able to find all the photos we have. Work on-going. Kitty Moores in charge of all modifications of the Photo Index
- 3 Sorting and indexing ring binders, box files etc. Since the start of lockdown in March 2020 we have been able to retrieve and return batches of files from time to time. We brought home the last batch on 12 February 2021 as Park Hall was open for training sessions – perhaps the last tenth of unindexed material. A number of the box files which were indexed up to 10 years ago will need checking/re-indexing and the contents put into 'punched pockets' to prepare them for transfer to lever-arch archive boxes. The Archive Index runs to c.1,500 A4 pages, and is detailed (names, events,

places, photos included in the files, accession numbers where identified). Kitty and Francis Dowley have indexed many files over the years. Rosemary Ross is in charge of the Archive File.

David Keen

## THE RIDLEY'S MANGLE

By David Keen

We have quite a lot of washday items in our collection and had the latest lockdown not happened, some of these would have been displayed in our cases in Harpenden Library. A wooden washing dolly, a washboard, Lifebuoy soap, Reckitt's Blue bags once so familiar, but now totally replaced by the washing machine, show how clothes were cleaned in the past.

Recently we were delighted to supplement the washday collection by acquiring a large cast iron mangle, not just any mangle, but one with a definite Harpenden connection, for the frame bears the words C E Ridley & Son - Harpenden.

Ridley's Ironmongers was at the corner of Station Road and the Lower High Street. In 1894 the newly-built shop replaced Chestnut Cottage, part of the buildings of the former Home Farm the demolition of which caused some regret, see our website for more information. It is unlikely that the mangle was made in Harpenden, there is no record of an iron foundry on the site, but it was not unusual for retailers to fix their nameplate to goods made elsewhere. We have a galvanised watering can with an H Salisbury plate riveted on, for example. The difference with the

mangle is that the name was cast in when the mangle was made in the foundry, not added later in the shop.

Unfortunately the previous owner of the mangle could not remember when or where she and her husband had obtained the mangle. They used to attend auctions in the Harpenden area and the mangle was simply an interesting object acquired at one of these sales. Perhaps someone will recognise it and let us know its history.

We look forward to putting the mangle on show in Harpenden Museum. It is too big to fit in a display case so will have to be a free standing object. One thing we will have to do is to devise a means of locking the mechanism. The exposed gear wheels, may be tempting to small fingers...

*Editor's note – the mangle is featured on the front cover*

## MUSEUM IN THE CULTURAL HUB

As members are aware, it is the Society's intention to open a brand new 1000 square feet museum, plus ancillary storage, in the new Cultural Hub in Rothamsted Park. This will enable the collection to be both stored and displayed in a modern purpose-built and centrally located cultural facility dedicated to the Arts. This is the realisation of our long cherished 'dream'. The building works by Willmott Dixon are nearing completion and it is currently understood will be finished in the late Spring in preparation for SADC internal fit-out. The Society will be talking a long lease over our 'space' and negotiations over terms and practicalities are nearing completion, hopefully by end April.

Following this, the Society will be installing modern museum fitting in preparation for opening the Museum by the end of the year. This exciting new venture for the Society is funded by the generous legacy from previous curator, Leslie Casey but any donations members wish to make to support the project would be most welcome.

We have already had a number of members (and non-members) indicating that they would be keen to volunteer to help at the new facility when it's opened. Members are now encouraged, if you have not already done so, to get in touch with David Keen (details on the website) if you would wish to put your name forward to participate, as a volunteer, in what will undoubtedly prove an exciting venture.

## ST MARGARET'S: A PHOTOGRAPH COMES HOME

Recently the Marple Local History Society (Manchester) received this photograph but with no information about it. Because the plaque over the door had the name 'St. Margaret's' and was similar to the one over the door of St Margaret's, Crossway in Harpenden, the Marple Society sent us a scan of the photograph and asked if we had information about the organisation who ran the Harpenden home (other than what was on our website). Could the two places have been run by the same people/organisation?

Rosemary Ross thought that the doorway and windows were so similar to Harpenden's St Margaret's; 1914 was when the orphanage opened in Cross Way and the lady who looked to be in charge fitted the description of Miss Croft, the Superintendent, that it must a photograph of Harpenden. However not all the



children had cropped hair as is described on the website page; the blouses they are wearing do not fit the description of the uniform (although the pinafores and boots do). These discrepancies may be because the time when the photo was taken and the only descriptions we have, may not coincide. The inscriptions on the plaques are different too but it does look, in the 2011 photograph and there has been verbal confirmation, that the Harpenden plaque had been refurbished at some stage.

As to the similarity in the building, if the two St Margaret's were run by the same organisation it could be they used the same design for their buildings.

To answer the conundrum John Marlow suggested looking for similarities in the brickwork, so I started the hunt and quickly found this:



From 'Marple' photograph



From 2011 photograph (Gavin Ross)

Note the brick just above the straight cable in the 2011 photo with two circles and a dark left edge can also be seen in the Marple photo



Also the bonding is the same

So it would seem Harpenden can claim the 'Marple' photograph as being of Harpenden's St Margaret and we now have a photo of the girls who had such a tough life there. See-

[http://www.harpenden-history.org.uk/page\\_id\\_105.aspx](http://www.harpenden-history.org.uk/page_id_105.aspx)

[http://www.harpenden-history.org.uk/page\\_id\\_236.aspx?path=0p4p65p](http://www.harpenden-history.org.uk/page_id_236.aspx?path=0p4p65p)

Did one of the girls end up living in Marple, I wonder.

Postscript - it looks to me as if a number of the girls are wearing Guide trefoil badges so perhaps they did get some recreation away from the house. Possibly with the 1st Coldharbour unit meeting at All Saints, Coldharbour Lane which was relatively close to both Willoughby Road (the orphanage's first house) and Crossway.

Diana Parrott



Covid-19 vaccination centre in the Harpenden Halls; February 2021  
Photographs by Rosemary Ross on behalf of the Local History Society





Harpenden Trust Centre, 90 Southdown Road - built as St John's Hall in c1900  
Rosemary Ross, 2011



The six WEA Booklets – see offer on page 16

## WEA BOOKLETS

Members will be aware that a ‘sister’ organisation of the Society, the History Publishing Society, published, in the 1970’s, a series of 6 booklets on Harpenden and Wheathampstead. These emanated from a Workers’ Educational Association course attended by many of the founding members of the Society.

Under the skilled tutorship of Lionel Munby MA, the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) classes in St Albans and Harpenden researched the origins and history of the Saxon parish of Wheathampstead, which gradually developed into the distinct communities of Wheathampstead and Harpenden. The results of this research were published in the series of illustrated booklets.

Vol 1 The Settlement –

Vol 2 New Men and New Society, C16 and early C17

Vol 3 Church and Chapel

Vol 4 The Age of Independence; from the Civil War to the Industrial Revolution

Vol 5 The Old Order Changeth – C19

Vol 6 The Schools

A number of members will have already purchased these booklets in the past and they are also digitally available on our website.

However, Trustees are aware that many, particularly newer members, will not have hard copy versions so, as a ‘Thank You’ for your continuing support during the pandemic when many of our normal activities have been curtailed, we would like to offer a set of the booklets to all members free of charge. All you need to do is contact John Bristow (details on the website) and arrange to pick up your free set from him once restrictions allow, probably after 12<sup>th</sup> April.

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father's  
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# SIXTY YEARS IN HARPENDEN

By Alan Bunting

On June 11<sup>th</sup> this year Joyce and I will have lived in Harpenden for sixty years. No, neither of us was born here, whereas a number of other U3A members can probably claim that distinction. Nevertheless, on learning of our long-standing residence in the town, people are apt to say ‘you must have seen a lot of changes’.

Among the things which *haven’t* changed are all those green public areas which give the ‘village’, as it was frequently referred to in the early 1960s, its undeniably appealing character. We are indeed fortunate to have Harpenden Common, Rothamsted Park, Church and Leyton Greens so close by, as well as, not too far away, Kinsbourne Green Common.

Since 1961 house prices have risen to an extent quite unforeseeable back then. It is almost embarrassing to admit that our new three-bedroomed semi-detached house in Wroxham Way, built on the former Ox Lane Nursery site, cost us just £2950.

Our garden backed on to the single-track railway line which was then still operating between Welwyn Garden City and Luton Bute Street. For our first year or two the trains were steam hauled, enabling us to sample the smoky smuts nowadays so relished by ‘anorak’ rail enthusiasts. The line was on the tree-lined embankment, still there today, which formed a welcome visual screen between us and the factories in Coldharbour Lane.

Half a mile south from us was Harpenden East station (where Waveney Road now stands) which, from 1860, pre-dates today's main (Midland) line station by about seven years. Those steam trains were superseded in about 1963 by characterless two-coach DMUs (diesel multiple units). But their era was short lived because in 1966 Dr Beeching wielded his axe and the line was closed, to be notionally replaced by the 366 bus service.

As soon as we moved into our new house, local traders were keen to solicit our custom, notably the milk suppliers. Everyone had their milk delivered and there was keen competition between a company calling itself New Dairies and the longer-established Watlers, whose headquarters farm was situated in Queens Road, on the site now occupied by the Bowling Close flats.

What of the town centre 60 years ago? Sainsbury's occupied half of what is now Boots' premises in the High Street, its long tiled walls and marble counters described in a recent newsletter article submitted by Sheila Brandreth. Harpenden's first supermarket had arrived in 1960. Under the name Premier – later Mac Fisheries – it occupied what is now the M&S store facing Church Green. But we tended to favour the small Budgens grocery shop in the High Street, roughly where the small Leas arcade is now.

Where Sainsbury's is today was Broadway Hall indoor market with stalls selling everything you would expect to get from St Albans St Peter's Street market. Next door was the Eastern Electricity showroom, with the rival gas company showroom nearby on the corner of Thompson's Close next to the Cross Keys.

W H Smith was on the opposite side of the High Street from where it is today. And there was another Smith emporium, next to the Old Cock Inn, which styled itself a corn chandler, meeting the needs of smallholders, allotment holders and so on. There were traditional small family-run shops aplenty, exemplified by the long-established Ackroyds bakery on the corner of Station Road and Victoria Road. Most housewives, shopping for fruit and vegetables, patronised one of the town's several independent greengrocers, with Fells in Station Road enjoying particularly loyal custom.

One of the numerous long-standing butchers was Dunckleys in the Lower High Street, where Threads is today. It was a Harpenden legend that the old horse chestnut tree on the green outside the shop continued to thrive thanks to being nurtured with blood from Dunckley's slaughterhouse.

Other retailing names to conjure with from the 1960s include Anscombes haberdashery and drapery (with its wonderful overhead wire inter-departmental cash transporter) in Leyton Road – with large trees in the roadway outside – where we now have Waitrose.

Then there was Kingston House general store, C&A builders' merchants and ironmongers (where Mountain Warehouse is now), Rolts cycle shop, Bentleys decorating supplies, Hockadays and Trustrams newsagents, Foster Yeoman in Station Road (purveyor of ladies' corsets and other unmentionables), Lovibonds off licence and Chirneys Garage (where Pizza Express is now). In Bowers Parade was Faith Heath, a shop supplying the kind of merchandise later made available nationwide by Mothercare.

Today's Inn on the Green facing the Common was Mary Ellen's tea room. Alternative places of refreshment were Bunty's on the corner of Vaughan Road and the upstairs café at Kingston House. Also notable were two different businesses under the Putterill name: the timber yard in Thompson's Close and the garage with its prominent bow-fronted canopy opposite the end of Sun Lane, which now houses Charles Wilson construction equipment company offices.

Visitors to Harpenden could stay at the prestigious Glen Eagle hotel, between Kirkdale Road and Townsend Lane, while a 100 yards or so further north stood Harpenden's last cinema, the Embassy – on a site where today you can fill up with BP petrol.

So big changes but, fortunately, Harpenden retains that certain aura which reminds its residents, both newcomers as well as those of us who have been here for a while, that there are plenty of worse places to live!

AB

## CORRECTION

The heading to the last paragraph of NL141, page 12 should read:

Jane Lines/Kingston

# THE HARPENDEN TRUST

It's origins and continuing relevance: from the Directors' Annual Report on the Trust for 2020.

## Formation and Incorporation

The Harpenden Trust ("the Trust") was founded in 1948, coinciding with the creation of the National Health Service. Despite the introduction of the "cradle to grave" welfare state, some residents in Harpenden at the time felt that there would always be a need to take care of people who fell through the net. It was this group that formed the original Harpenden Trust.

Today the activities of the Trust are managed though a Company, limited by Guarantee, which was incorporated on 29th September 2006 with registration number 5951591. It is governed like all companies by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. On 1st June 2007 the assets of the Harpenden Trust, Charity Number 212973 (the "Former Trust"), were transferred to the Company and the Former Trust ceased to exist. Those assets now constitute the Care Fund. On 17th April 2008 the Abbeyfield {Harpenden} Society Limited transferred all its assets to the Trust and these assets now constitute the Community Fund.

## Strategic Direction

The Trust has four charitable purposes, as formally set out within the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association:

- the promotion of volunteering in the community of Harpenden;

- the promotion of civic responsibility and good citizenship amongst the youth of Harpenden;
- the relief of residents of Harpenden either individually or collectively who are in need by reason of their youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other social and economic disadvantage by: the provision of grants of money; the provision of items; the payment for, and/or provision of services; other such means as will address their needs, and to promote for the benefit of the residents of Harpenden the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure-time occupation of individuals who have the need for such facilities by reason of their youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the life of the said residents.

The Board has resolved that all references to "Harpenden" mean the postal district of Harpenden and its immediate surroundings.

### Supporting the Community

The story of the Harpenden Trust has for over 70 years been one of good neighbourliness. Harpenden as a town has, within its community, both the needy and the well off. "One could help the other" was at the heart of our founding principles, and "Funded by Harpenden people, managed by Harpenden people to benefit Harpenden people" continues to be our mantra.

### The Coronavirus Pandemic

Richard Nichols, Chairman of the Harpenden Trust:

Although this Directors' Report covers the twelve-month period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, it almost goes without saying that it is the final month that has had the most dramatic impact on Harpenden and the Trust's activities. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented and uncertain environment for all communities and had an immediate impact on the lives of many vulnerable individuals locally. The 70-year history of the Harpenden Trust has centred around our ability to step up to the plate swiftly and support our local community when it has needed us most - and this we did in 2020, delivering immediate support across our community.

As part of the 'Harpenden Cares' initiative, we substantially scaled-up our Care Fund operations, in particular establishing a fully staffed call-centre based at our main Southdown Halls to act as the 'Harpenden Cares Contact Centre'. This Contact Centre has provided the necessary link between requests for assistance and the resources available to meet those requests.

Within a matter of a few days in early March 2020 we had transformed the original single telephone line into the Trust offices into a fully operational 12 line call centre with a newly installed VOiP system, combining a 24 hour answering service capability and all linked to the original Harpenden Trust telephone number - 01582 460457. A newly recruited team of more than 20 Call Handlers, all local volunteers, stepped forward to handle the calls received between 10am and 2pm each weekday (including all Bank Holidays), ensuring all callers received an immediate warm and empathetic response. Over the initial 8 weeks, we became the voice of Harpenden Cares, handling a huge variety of requests. At the outset we were

answering between 150 and 170 calls per week. The majority of calls related to assisted shopping and prescription/medication pickup, although in reality there was rarely such a thing as a "standard call". Over time, the Foodbank began to operate on a regular delivery schedule sometimes weekly but often fortnightly, reducing the overall volume of calls.

There was an ever-rising demand for our Befriending activities, with now currently over 40 members. We were also asked by the St Albans, Harpenden and Redbourn GP Federation to take on delivering and collecting back oxygen saturation monitors between the established Halley Stewart hub and patients' homes. We have developed our internal Charity Log system to be accessible to our Harpenden Cares partners. This has allowed us to send requests for assistance directly from Charity Log to our partners, including for a Foodbank operated by The Salvation Army; for a shopping service coordinated by Bethany Church and for medical needs which mainly involves collecting and delivering prescriptions.

Our expanded Care Fund operations have accessed our extensive existing Harpenden Trust volunteer network. This is in addition to our regular office volunteers. Home visits have been operating via telephone consultations and we have been able to provide a shopping service for clients who are self-isolated. For our regular clients (from Christmas parcels, utilities and outings) we have been giving them a friendly call to check on their well-being.

We have an incredible team of volunteers who have enabled us to scale-up our operations in this way in record time, and to whom we offer our huge thanks. Thanks are also due to our partners across the Harpenden Cares network, as it has been a

direct result of all the tremendous teamwork that has enabled us to answer well over 1,000 calls to the Contact Centre and meet all the requests for assistance we have received so far. This was a truly wonderful achievement - all enabled by some amazing individuals - and the Directors could not be more proud of everything the Harpenden Trust and its volunteers have all achieved in this period. The directors each offer a simple but sincere "Thank You" to all who have played their part.

*This article was first posted on the Society's website by Rosemary Ross in February 2021.*

### Footnote

Since this report was written, the Harpenden Trust has worked in partnership with the Harpenden GPs and Harpenden Town Council to establish the Harpenden Vaccination Centre in the Public Halls - opened on 13 January 2021. Over 700 local citizens volunteered to help as marshalls and assistants, enabling a very smooth vaccination service to grateful Harpenden people - initially the frail and elderly.

